



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600091805T

124 f. 71



To the Bodleian Librarian
from Edward S. Dodgson, June
13





INSTITUTES
OF
NATURAL AND REVEALED
RELIGION.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An ESSAY on the best Method of communicating religious
Knowledge to the Members of Christian Societies.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

VOL. I.

Wisdom is the principal Thing.

SOLOMON.

LONDON:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCIV.



600091805T

124 f. 71



To the Bodleian Library
from Edward S. Dodgson, June 2
1911

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses, which appears to be a directory or a list of contacts. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are listed below them. The list includes names such as "John A. Smith", "John B. Smith", "John C. Smith", "John D. Smith", "John E. Smith", "John F. Smith", "John G. Smith", "John H. Smith", "John I. Smith", "John J. Smith", "John K. Smith", "John L. Smith", "John M. Smith", "John N. Smith", "John O. Smith", "John P. Smith", "John Q. Smith", "John R. Smith", "John S. Smith", "John T. Smith", "John U. Smith", "John V. Smith", "John W. Smith", "John X. Smith", "John Y. Smith", and "John Z. Smith".

most unfeigned gratitude to the *Father of lights*, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkness, in which our excellent religion was, for so many ages, involved; but let this consideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes so glorious a light. If your conduct be such as, instead of recommending your own generous principles, furnishes an excuse to others, for acquiescing in their prejudices and errors, all the dishonour which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jesus Christ, by keeping it longer in a corrupted state at home, and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation.

Value the *scriptures*, as a treasury of divine knowledge, consisting of books which are eminently calculated to inspire you with just sentiments, and prompt you to right conduct; and consider them also as the only proper *authority in matters of faith*.

In a thing so interesting to you as the business of *religion*, affecting the regulation of your conduct here, so as to prepare you for immortal happiness hereafter, respect no *human authority* whatever. Submit to those who are invested with the supreme power in your country, as your lawful *civil magistrates*; but if they would prescribe to you in *matters of faith*, say that you have but one *Father even God*,

THE DEDICATION.

God, and one Master, even Christ, and stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free. Respect a parliamentary king, and cheerfully pay all parliamentary taxes; but have nothing to do with a parliamentary religion, or a parliamentary God.*

Religious rights, and religious liberty, are things of inestimable value. For these have many of our ancestors suffered and died; and shall we, in the sunshine of prosperity, desert that glorious cause, from which no storms of adversity or persecution could make them swerve. Let us consider it as a duty of the first rank with respect to moral obligation, to transmit to our posterity, and provide, as far as we can, for transmitting, unimpaired, to the latest generations, that generous zeal for religion and liberty, which makes the memory of our forefathers so truly illustrious.

So long as it shall please that God, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, to continue me in that relation, in which I think myself happy in standing to you at present, I trust that I shall not fail to endeavour to impress your minds with a just sense of what you owe to God, to your country, and to mankind. Let it be our mutual care to derive the most durable advantage from our present temporary connection, by

* This was the language held, as I have been informed, by Lord Wharton, in the debate about the act of William and Mary, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity.

growing continually more *established, strengthened, and settled*, in the habit and practice of all the virtues which become us as men and as christians; that we may secure a happy meeting, and mutual congratulation in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

I am,

My young friends,

with affection and esteem,

your brother and servant,

in the gospel of Jesus Christ,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Leeds, March, 1772.

* * I hope that the younger part of my congregation at Birmingham will consider what I originally addressed to my pupils at Leeds as addressed to themselves; and I flatter myself that the extension of my plan of lecturing in my present situation, will be attended with proportionable pleasure to myself, and advantage to them.

BIRMINGHAM, JAN. 1, 1782.

P R E F A C E.

NO branch of knowledge can be taught to advantage except in a regular, or systematical method. It is also very convenient, both for the teacher and the learner, to have the *elements* of any science drawn up in a succinct manner; by the help of which the one may be directed in what order to explain the several branches of it, and the other may see at one view all its constituent parts, in their natural connection, and thereby gain the most comprehensive and distinct idea of the whole, which is also a great advantage for retaining it in memory.

It was with a view to the instruction of youth that the following *Institutes* were composed, and nothing more was meant, originally, than to furnish myself with an easy method of discoursing upon the subjects of natural and revealed religion to the young men of my own congregation, whom I formed into a class for that purpose. But when

I was induced to publish them, for the benefit of others, I made them a little fuller; that those young persons who can have little or no assistance in their inquiries, might be able to read them with tolerable advantage. I shall think myself happy if this *manual* be the means of establishing any of the youth of the present age in the sound knowledge of those most important subjects to which it is appropriated. I am satisfied that no man can write, or live, to better purpose.

As my sole view in this short system was to teach the elements of religious knowledge to persons intended for *common and civil life*, and not for any of the learned professions, I have avoided, as much as I possibly could, those metaphysical and abstruse speculations, which have been raised from every branch of my subject, and have chiefly confined myself to such considerations as are most adapted to produce conviction in the minds of those who are not much used to close reflection; and I have endeavoured through the whole to express myself with the greatest clearness and precision. For this purpose, I have been obliged to depart considerably from the plan of any treatise that I have yet seen upon these subjects.

I am far, however, from being able to promise that I shall leave these subjects free from all obscurity. The mind of man will never be able to contemplate the being, perfections, and providence of
God

God without meeting with inexplicable difficulties. We may find sufficient reason for acquiescing in the darkness which involves these great subjects, but we must never expect to see them set in a perfectly clear light. But notwithstanding this, we may know enough of the divine being, and of his moral government, to make us much better and happier beings than we could be without such knowledge; and even the consideration of the insuperable difficulties referred to above is not without its use, as it tends to impress the mind with sentiments of reverence, humility, and submission.

I have also had another view in not chusing to conceal some of the great difficulties which attend the demonstration, if not of the *being*, yet of the most essential *attributes*, and moral government of God. It was, that the consideration of them might make us more sensible of the value of *revelation*, by which many of them are, in a great measure, cleared up, and by which great light has been thrown upon every important branch of natural religion.

Many unbelievers avail themselves very much of the *diversity of opinions* which prevails among the professors of revealed religion, and boast of the great *clearness*, as well as *sufficiency of the light of nature*. But the case is much otherwise; and there have been, in fact, among men of the greatest learning and acuteness of thought, believers and

unbelievers in revelation, as great a diversity of opinion with respect to the principles of natural, as of revealed religion. And notwithstanding the various sentiments of christians, they are all perfectly agreed, and unanimous, with respect to all the most important doctrines of natural religion, concerning which unbelievers in revelation have never been able to arrive at any certainty, or uniformity of opinion; so that men who think at all are very far from getting rid of any real difficulty by abandoning revelation. Nay, the difficulties which we shall find upon this subject among christians, though I shall not fail to state them with the greatest fairness, suppressing nothing that can contribute to their strength, are by no means so embarrassing to the mind of man, as those which occur in the contemplation of nature.

If any person, discouraged by these difficulties, should think to relieve himself by rejecting *all religion*, natural and revealed, he will find, if he reflect at all, that he has miserably deceived himself, and that he is involved in greater perplexity than ever; the scheme he has adopted not only filling his mind with great darkness and distress, but being contrary to some of the plainest appearances in nature, and therefore manifestly irrational and absurd. In this case, therefore, true philosophy will lead a man to acquiesce in that scheme of principles which is attended with the fewest difficulties,

faculties, without expecting to meet with any that is quite free from them; and a good man will be drawn by a strong propensity to embrace that system, the contemplation and influence of which will tend to make him, and his brethren of mankind, most virtuous and happy. This important circumstance will always operate as an evidence for the truth of natural and revealed religion, on minds which are not perverted by sophistry, or vice.

In the latter part of these Institutes, which relates to the duty and final expectations of mankind, it will be seen that I have made great use of *Dr. Hartley's observations on man*. To this writer I think myself happy in having any fair opportunity of making my acknowledgements; and I shall think that a very valuable end will be gained, if, by this or any other means, a greater degree of attention could be drawn upon that most excellent performance, so as to make it more generally read, and studied, by those who are qualified to do it. I do not know any thing that is better adapted to make an impression upon truly philosophical minds than the sketch that he has given of the evidences of christianity, in his second volume; and for this reason I should be exceedingly glad to see that part of his work published separately.

AN ESSAY ON THE BEST METHOD OF COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.

THE superficial knowledge, or rather the extreme ignorance of the generality of youth in the present age, with respect to religion, is the subject of great and just complaint ; and for want of being well established in the principles of *rational religion*, many of them are daily falling a prey to *enthusiasm* on one hand, and *infidelity* on the other. In this life we must not expect any good without some attendant evil. The circumstance of which we now complain has been, in part, the natural effect of the moderation of the present times, in which no person is even questioned about his religion. For, as the subject is never canvassed, nor so much as started in polite company, no person thinks it worth his while to prepare himself for making any reply ; and, consequently, the youth of this age never professedly study the subject, or ever give more than an occasional and cursory attention to it.

Another

Another source of this complaint is, the little care that is now taken by parents in the religious instruction of their children. They condemn the severity with which they recollect that they themselves were treated ; and, not considering the advantage which they derive from it, exclaim against such excessive rigour and austerity, and throw off not only the *tutor*, but almost the *master* too, with respect to their children ; not recollecting that, after this, there is little left of the *parent* that is truly valuable. To this conduct they are, no doubt, at the same time, secretly influenced by a regard to their own ease ; for upon the present fashionable plan, a person gives himself very little trouble indeed about forming the minds of his offspring ; and, some may think, that they have sufficiently done their duty in this respect, when they have provided them with *masters* to superintend their education in general.

Many persons will not readily adopt my sentiments relating to this subject. For my own part, however, I have not the least doubt, but that, though the maxims of our forefathers may have been too strict, we of the present age are already far gone in another extreme, opposite to theirs and much more dangerous. Their method, by restraining the inclinations of youth, might (though perhaps, upon the whole, it might not) diminish the happiness of that early period of life ; and, in
some

some instances, I doubt not, the excessive restraints they were under might serve to inflame their passions, and prepare them for the more unbounded and criminal indulgence of them, when they became their own masters; but, in general, habits of sobriety and moderation were, by this means, effectually formed, and a disposition to licentiousness entirely precluded.

On the contrary, our greater indulgence to youth gives them more *liberty*, but, perhaps, not more real *enjoyment* even of early life; but, whatever good effect this conduct may have upon some ingenuous tempers, I am satisfied that, in general, it is fatal to virtue and happiness through life. Our youth having had little or no restraint put upon their inclinations, and religious principles not having been sufficiently inculcated, they give the reins to pleasure, at that critical time of life, in which the passions are peculiarly strong, and reason weak; and the authority of a parent not interposing, where it is most wanted, a disposition to licentiousness is completely formed, and such bad habits are contracted, as too often end in profligacy and ruin. At best, their minds not having been seasoned with the principles of religion, they become mere *men of the world*, without vice, perhaps, but also without virtue.

Also, in consequence of the same superficial education, to say the least of it, our youth having never
thought

thought upon the subject of religion, instead of entertaining those enlarged sentiments of *religious liberty*, which will never be wholly extinct in the breasts of their parents, the slightest inducement is often sufficient to make them abandon the *dissenting interest*, the value of which they were never taught to understand; and to make them conform to the established religion of this, and, for the same reason to that of any other country in the world, attended with sufficient temporal encouragement.

With the disuse of *family prayer*, the regular *reading of the scriptures* has also been laid aside; so that in most of our opulent families, the youth have hardly an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the contents of those books which are the source of all religious knowledge. When the bible, if there be one in the family, is wholly neglected by the parent, what inducement can the son have to look into it?

A false taste, and a pretended reverence for the scriptures, has, likewise, banished them from many of our schools; so that, except their being read in detached and unconnected portions, in places of public worship, many persons, it is to be feared, would live and die in utter ignorance of the contents of their bibles.

With this neglect of family discipline, the neglect of discipline in our churches, which has been owing to similar causes, has likewise concurred.

In

In many of our societies the business of *catechising* has, likewise, been laid aside, nor has any thing been substituted in its place, as better adapted to communicate religious knowledge; so that, as the minister is seldom seen but in the pulpit (I mean in a ministerial character) all the opportunity that the people have of being instructed in the theory of religion, is their hearing miscellaneous discourses, which are now almost every where confined to subjects which have an immediate relation to practice, while the *theory of religion*, and the *evidences of it*, are almost wholly neglected.

Because *common sense* is a sufficient guard against many errors in religion, it seems to have been taken for granted, that common sense is a sufficient *instructor* also; whereas, in fact, without positive instruction, men would naturally have been mere *savages* with respect to religion; as, without similar instruction, they would be savages with respect to the arts of life and the sciences. Common sense can only be compared to a *judge*; but what can a judge do without evidence, and proper materials from which to form a judgment.

Such is the *evil*, of which not myself only, but every person who seriously considers the present state of things among the Dissenters, and its manifest tendency in futurity, complain. Let us now consider what is the most proper and effectual *remedy* for

for this evil, and how far the application of it may be easy and practicable.

As the source of the evil, as far it arises from ourselves, was observed to be two fold, namely, the neglect of *parental* and *ministerial* instruction, it is easy to infer, that the most complete and effectual remedy must be two-fold also, consisting in the revival of that discipline, both in churches and private families, by which we ourselves received that instruction, the advantages of which we are apt to overlook, till we see the dreadful effects of the want of it in others. If the discipline of our forefathers, in either of these respects, has been too severe for the gentleness of modern manners, let that severity be relaxed, but let nothing that is really useful be laid aside.

It is certainly desirable, that more attention be given both to the morals, and the religious instruction of youth, by those who undertake the conduct of our societies, as well as by their parents. But if it be impossible, as I am apprehensive it generally will be, to revive the antient forms of our church discipline, (in consequence of which a number of the most intelligent, serious, and prudent members of our churches might be appointed to superintend the instruction of youth) let the minister exert himself the more in this field, which alone can promise a reward for his labours. When a person's mode of thinking, and his habits of life are fixed, as they generally

generally are before he arrives at thirty or forty years of age, and especially when they have been confirmed by having met with no opposition or controul, from that time to a more advanced period of life, there can be but little prospect of making any good and lasting impressions. In this case, a change of thinking, or acting, will be brought about, if at all with very great difficulty, and old notions, and habits will be apt to return upon the slightest occasions, and get firmer hold of the mind than ever.

If men have lived all their lives unacquainted with better principles, the proposal of them may strike and influence; but if they relate to subjects which they have often heard canvassed, and on which little can be said that is absolutely *new* to them; it may be taken for granted, that the recital of arguments which they presume have been fully confuted, will only confirm them in their former prejudices. It is best, therefore, to bear with the *aged*, and, in many cases, with those who are advanced to middle life, and not without some very urgent reason, arising from very particular circumstances, attempt the arduous, and almost hopeless task, of rectifying their errors; though something more should be done towards reforming their conduct. But, in youth, the mind is flexible, opinions are unfixed, and habits not confirmed. At this time of life, therefore, arguments and expostulations
may

may have real weight ; good principles and maxims may be recommended with effect ; and a little seasonable assistance may be sufficient to mould them to our wish.

The great object of a minister's chief attention being thus fixed, viz. upon the younger, and more teachable part of his congregation, it remains to be considered, in what manner their instruction may be best provided for. Now, it appears to me, that the only effectual provision for this purpose, is a course of regular and systematical instruction. Every branch of knowledge is built on certain *facts* and *principles* ; and in order that these be fully and clearly understood, they must be delivered in a proper order, so that one thing may most naturally introduce another. In other words, no branch of knowledge, religion not excepted, can be taught to advantage but in the way of *system*. Frightful as the word may sound, it signifies nothing, but an orderly and regular set of principles, beginning with the easiest, and ending with the most difficult, which, in this manner, are the most easily demonstrated. No person would ever think of teaching *Law* or *Medicine*, or any other branch of science, in the manner in which religion is now generally taught ; and as no person ever acquired a competent knowledge of *Law*, *Medicine*, or any other science by hearing miscellaneous discourses upon the subject ; so neither can we reasonably expect that

that a just and comprehensive knowledge of religion should ever be communicated in the same loose and incoherent manner. Besides, it is now too much the fashion to neglect public worship, and any scheme of business or pleasure is thought to be a sufficient excuse for a person's absenting himself from it, even on the Lord's day; so that this only means of instruction, insufficient as it is for the purpose, is becoming every day more uncertain; and it may be expected that less advantage will be made of it continually.

On these accounts, religious knowledge will never be communicated with certainty and good effect, from the pulpit only. Those of the congregation who think themselves already sufficiently knowing, will be disgusted with the repetition of elementary principles; to those who are extremely ignorant, it is not possible, in a formal discourse, to speak plainly and familiarly enough; and those whose minds are not sufficiently enlightened, and especially those whose prejudices are of long standing, will be apt to take offence at the discovery of truths which it will be impossible for them to comprehend or receive.

There can be no hope, therefore, of doing any thing to good purpose, in this way, unless the minister can have an opportunity of discoursing to the young persons by themselves. He may then converse

verse with them familiarly on the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion ; he may say the same things over and over again, and change his form of expression, in order to make himself perfectly understood ; he may also illustrate what he advances by familiar instances, and examples, and set every thing of importance in a great variety of lights. Moreover, if they will submit to it (which it will be greatly to their advantage to do) he may *examine* them on the subjects on which he has discoursed, so as to satisfy himself whether they have perfectly understood him, whether they retain in memory the facts and reasonings which he has advanced, and be sufficiently grounded in one thing before he proceeds to another. This method will also give him an opportunity of removing any difficulties, or answering any objections which may have occurred to them, or which may have been thrown in their way by other persons. In short, I would advise a minister to form the young men of his congregation from the age of eighteen or twenty to about thirty into an *academical class*, and take the very same methods to teach them the elements of religion, that he would do to teach them the rudiments of any branch of natural knowledge.

To make this business the easier to the tutor, and the more advantageous to his pupils, it will be rather advisable, that he give his lectures from
a short

a short text or system, written, or rather printed, that they may have an opportunity of perusing it, and of studying it when they are by themselves, and thereby the better prepare themselves for examination.

I do not give this advice at random, or from theory only; for I have carried the scheme which I am now recommending into execution; and I can assure my friends in the ministry that, as far as my own experience is a guide, they may promise themselves much pleasure, and their pupils much advantage from the exercise.

If it can be made agreeable to the people, I would also advise, that the minister deliver the heads of his system in a set of regular discourses to the congregation at large, once in four or five years, that those persons whom it may not be advisable to admit to his familiar lectures, may have an opportunity of hearing some useful topics discussed at least in a concise manner, which they might, otherwise, have never heard of at all. But if the congregation should not be sufficiently uniform in their sentiments, it will hardly be prudent, for reasons, sufficiently hinted above, to adopt this measure. It will also depend upon particular circumstances, whether the *young women* should be admitted to the familiar lectures along with the young men, or not.

That

That my readers may perfectly understand my scheme, and derive what advantage they please from it, I now publish the principal heads of my own lectures, in these *Institutes of natural and revealed religion*. Ministers whose sentiments are pretty nearly my own may, perhaps, save themselves trouble by making use of them, departing from my particular sentiments or method, whenever they think proper. The whole work is divided into three parts, the first comprizing the principles of natural religion; the second the evidences of revelation; and the third the doctrines of revelation. I have also nearly completed *another work*, which may also be of use in the instruction of young persons. It will be intitled, *An Historical Account of the corruptions of christianity*. This will contain the reasons for our protestant faith, and also those of our dissent from the established church of England, with which every dissenter ought to be made thoroughly acquainted.

Besides this principal class, I would advise a minister, who is desirous to communicate religious knowledge with effect, and who would adapt his instructions to the different ages of his hearers, to form *two other classes*, one consisting of children under fourteen years of age. To these he should teach a *short catechism*, containing the first elements of religious knowledge, delivered in the plainest and most familiar language possible; and when it is
made

made use of, a variety of other questions should be asked, calculated to bring the subject to the level of their capacities. A catechism of this kind I published some years ago; and I am satisfied, from my own experience, that a child, even of four or five years of age, may be made to understand the most important truths of christianity, and that it is of great consequence that the minds of children be impressed with this kind of knowledge as early as possible. No person who has actually made a trial of this method of instructing children, and who can do it with any degree of judgment, will say that it is a painful task to children. On the contrary, I have generally found them to be pleased, and in many cases exceedingly delighted with it.

In the other junior class I would teach the knowledge of the *scriptures* only. This appears to me to be a subject so distinct, copious, and important, that a separate class should be appropriated to it; and I think that the best manner in which this great end can be gained, is to have a set of *questions only*, printed, with references to those places in the bible, which must be read, in order to find the proper answers. Such a *scripture catechism* as this I have also published. This class may properly consist of young persons of both sexes, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, so as to be an intermediate class, between the two others. It may be advisable, however, and may even be
VOL. I. b necessary

necessary at the first, to add to this class such members of the higher class as are not sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures; and, in the present state of our societies, I am afraid that many such will be found above eighteen years of age; but of these it may be hoped, that there will be many who will not think themselves too old to learn, and who may even take pleasure in such an exercise as this, which is equally calculated to improve the most knowing, as well as to instruct the most ignorant.

These three classes appear to me to be sufficient for the purpose of communicating religious instruction; at least, I cannot, at present, think of any thing better adapted to the purpose. I sincerely wish, that other ministers, who cannot but be sensible of the evil that I complain of, would propose what appears to them to be a proper remedy for it, and let us freely adopt whatever we approve in each other's schemes.

To make room for lectures of such manifest utility as these, which I have now recommended, it were to be wished that *weekly*, and other *periodical preaching lectures*, especially that which is in many places preparatory to the Lord's, were laid aside. The last-mentioned service, whatever good it may do in other respects, does, unquestionably, promote superstition; continually suggesting and confirming the opinion, that the attendance upon this christian
ordi-

ordinance requires more particular preparation than any other, which is an idea that could never occur to any person in perusing the New Testament only, and can be nothing but the remains of the popish doctrine of transubstantiation.

Other weekly or monthly sermons are seldom attended, except by a few persons, and those chiefly the aged; and such others as have the least occasion for them; and they are often a burden to the minister, who is sensible that he is giving his labour, which might be better bestowed, to very little purpose. It has seemed fit to infinite wisdom, that one day in seven is proper and sufficient for rest from labour, and the purposes of public worship. When we are got beyond this *scripture directory*, all the rest is such *will worship* as no bounds can be set to. It has certainly been the foundation of much superstition, and has, in many cases, occasioned a fatal and very criminal neglect of the proper business of this life. In what I have now said, I would by no means be understood to condemn all occasional acts of public worship, as on days set apart for public fasting and thanksgiving, or on particular annual solemnities, some of which answer very good purposes.

As all christians are brethren, and we are expressly commanded to *exhort one another*, I hope it will not be deemed arrogant in me to have given my advice with respect to a matter of so much importance,

as the best method of communicating religious knowledge, in which all christian ministers are equally concerned. The schemes which I have proposed are such as I can recommend from the trial that I have made of them, and they appear to me to be very practicable by any person who is sufficiently qualified to discharge any other part of the ministerial duty; and in the *country*, I believe that such services will generally be acceptable, as well as useful. As to the *city*, I am not so well able to judge; but if I be not misinformed, the connection between *minister* and *people* is, in general, so slight, that schemes which suppose much personal respect for the pastor on one side, and an affectionate concern for the people on the other, can hardly be expected to succeed. The prevailing practice of a London Minister preaching to one congregation in the morning, and to another in the afternoon, when each of them is able to provide for one (as in fact they half provide for two) tends still farther to sink the *minister* into a mere *lecturer*, and to exclude the idea of every thing besides a stipulated sum of money on the one side, and mere *stipulated duty* on the other. In such congregations one would think that the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus were never read; and certainly the business of *ordination* in such places must be a mere form, or farce, without any meaning whatever.

Hoping

Hoping that my presumption in offering the preceding advice has not given offence, I shall take the farther liberty to conclude with a word of exhortation, in which I shall think myself equally concerned.

Since, my brethren in the christian ministry, in the present state of church discipline, so unequal a share of the burden is fallen upon us, let us not, through despair of doing every thing that ought to be done, think ourselves excusable in attempting nothing. If we cannot possibly warn all the unruly, comfort all the feeble-minded, instruct all the ignorant, confirm all the doubting, and seek and save all that are in danger of being lost, let us do all that we can in each of these branches of ministerial duty. Since, with respect to the business of *admonition*, we are so circumstanced, that we can but seldom attempt any thing with a prospect of success, let us do the more by way of *instruction*, which is a field that is still open to us. If we cannot reclaim from vice, let us endeavour to instill those principles, which may prevent the commission of it, and to communicate that rational and useful knowledge, which is the only solid foundation of virtuous practice and good conduct in life.

If every man be a *steward*, according to the ability and opportunity which God has given him of being useful to his fellow-creatures, much more

ought we to consider ourselves in that light; and it is required of every steward that he be faithful to his trust. The master under whom we act, and to whom we are immediately accountable is the great *shepherd and bishop of souls, Christ Jesus*. Our instructions are to *feed his lambs and his sheep*. Let us see to it, then, that none of those who are committed to our care *perish for lack of knowledge*. If they will *die in their iniquity*, let us so act under the melancholy prospect, that *their blood may not be required at our hands*; that we may, at least, *save our own souls, if not those that hear us*. When our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, let it appear that we have diligently improved the talents with which we were intrusted, that of two we have made other two, and of five other five, &c. and then, and then only, shall we *not be ashamed before him at his coming*.

Advertisement to the second edition.

Since the publication of the first edition of this work, I am able to recommend the plan here laid down by farther experience, having considerably extended the courses of my lectures to young persons in my present situation at Birmingham; having made a separate class of the *young women*, and the
society

society having been so liberal, as to provide a very valuable library, which will be continually increasing, chiefly for the use of those who attend the classes; consisting of books recommended by the ministers for that purpose. Also, besides the lectures recommended in this introductory essay, I find it useful to teach *scripture geography* to the younger classes, and with the elder I shall probably go through a short course of *Jewish antiquities*, *ecclesiastical history*, and such other miscellaneous branches of knowledge, as may be more particularly useful, to enable them to read the scriptures with advantage.

THE
C O N T E N T S

OF
VOLUME I.

P A R T I.

O F the being and attributes of God.	Page 1
Sec. I. <i>Of the existence of God, and those attributes which are deduced from his being considered as uncaused himself, and the cause of every thing else.</i>	- - 3
Sec. II. <i>Of those attributes of the deity which are deduced from the consideration of his being the original cause of all things.</i>	- - - - - 10
Sec. III. <i>Of those attributes of the divine being which the consideration of his works leads us to ascribe to him.</i>	- - - - - 12
Sec. IV. <i>Of those attributes of God which are deduced from the consideration of his power, wisdom, and goodness jointly.</i>	- - - - - 26
Sec. V. <i>Of the properties of the divine goodness.</i>	31
Sec. VI. <i>Of the Moral perfections of God deduced from his goodness.</i>	- - - - - 38
	CHAP.

THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. II. Of the duty, and future expectations of mankind. - - - - -	45
Sec. I. <i>Of the rule of right and wrong.</i> - -	ibid.
Sec. II. <i>Of the different objects of pursuit, and the different passions and affections of men corresponding to them.</i> - - - - -	52
Sec. III. <i>Of the ruling passion, and an estimate of the propriety and value of the different pursuits of mankind.</i> - - - - -	57
§ 1. <i>Of the pleasures of sense.</i> - - - - -	59
§ 2. <i>Of the pleasures of imagination.</i> - - - - -	66
§ 3. <i>Of self-interest.</i> - - - - -	68
§ 4. <i>Of the passions which arise from our social nature</i> - - - - -	75
§ 5. <i>Of the sympathetic affections.</i> - - - - -	79
§ 6. <i>Of the relative duties.</i> - - - - -	85
§ 7. <i>Of the Theopathic affections.</i> - - - - -	87
§ 8. <i>Of the obligation of conscience.</i> - - - - -	92
Sec. IV. <i>Of the means of virtue.</i> - - - - -	96
CHAP. III. <i>Of the future expectations of mankind</i> - - - - -	105

PART II.

Containing the Evidences of the Jewish and Christian Revelations. - - - - -	117
<i>The Introduction.</i> - - - - -	119
PART II. The Evidences of Revealed Religion. - - - - -	130
CHAP.	

CHAP. I. Of the state of the heathen world. 131

Sec. I. *Of the origin and corruption of natural religion in general.* - - - - - 132

Sec. II. *Of the corruption of theology in particular.* 139

Sec. III. *Of the moral sentiments of the heathens.* 156

Sec. IV. *Of the doctrine of a future state among the heathens.* - - - - - 171

CHAP. II. Observations previous to the Examination of the proper evidences of revelation. 188

Sec. I. *Of the nature and use of miracles.* - ibid.

Sec. II. *Of the nature of the evidence of revelation.* 192

Sec. III. *Of the importance of testimony, and the credibility of miracles.* - - - - - 195

Sec. IV. *Rules for estimating the value of human testimony.* - - - - - 204

Sec. V. *Of the antecedent credibility of the Jewish and christian revelations.* - - - - - 208

CHAP. III. The evidences of the Jewish and christian religions, derived from Testimony, and especially that of its friends. - - - 214

Sec. I. *Of the authenticity of the books of scripture.* ib.

Sec. II. *Of the evidence from testimony in favour of the christian revelation.* - - - - - 226

Sec. IV. *Considerations on the resurrection of Christ, and other facts of a similar nature.* - - - 244

Sec. V. *Of the credibility of the Old Testament history* - - - - - 258

CHAP.

CHAP. IV. The evidence of the Jewish and christian revelations, derived from <i>present appearances</i> . - - - - -	268
Sec. I. <i>Arguments from the existence, propagation, and good effects of the Jewish and christian religions</i> . ib.	
Sec. II. <i>Arguments from standing Customs, &c. in favour of the Jewish and christian religions</i> . 282	
Sec. III. <i>Various internal evidences of the truth of the scripture history</i> . - - - - -	287
CHAP. V. The evidence of revealed religion from <i>prophecy</i> . - - - - -	298
Sec. I. <i>Prophecies relating to various nations which had connections with the Jews</i> . - - - - -	299
Sec. II. <i>Prophecies relating to the Messiah</i> . -	309
Sec. III. <i>Prophecies in the New Testament</i> . -	321

 ERRATUM.

Vol. I. page 105, for *Part 3*, read *Section 5*.

INSTITUTES
OF
RELIGION.

PART I.

OF THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

IN these Institutes I shall endeavour to explain *the principles of natural and revealed religion*; or to assign the reasons why we acknowledge ourselves to be subject to the moral government of God, and why we profess ourselves to be christians, and consistent protestants.

Knowledge of this kind is, in its own nature, the most important of any that we can give our attention to; because it is the most nearly connected with our present and future happiness.

If there be a God, and if we be accountable to him for our conduct, it must be highly interesting to us to know all that we can concerning his character and government, concerning what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him. If it be true that a person, pretending to be sent from God, hath assured us of a future life,

it certainly behoves us to examine his pretensions to divine authority; and if we see reason to admit them, to inform ourselves concerning the whole of his instructions, and particularly what kind of behaviour here will secure our happiness hereafter. Lastly, if the religion we profess be divine, and have been corrupted by the ignorance or artifice of men, it is a matter of consequence that it be restored to its primitive purity; because its efficacy upon the heart and life must depend upon it. And if men have usurped any power with respect to religion which the author of it has not given them, it is of consequence that their unjust claims be exposed and resisted.

In order to give the most distinct view of the principles of religion, I shall first explain what it is that we learn from *nature*, and then what farther lights we receive from *revelation*. But it must be observed, that, in giving a delineation of natural religion, I shall deliver what I suppose *might* have been known concerning God, our duty, and our future expectations by the light of nature, and not what *was actually* known of them by any of the human race; for these are very different things. Many things are, in their own nature, attainable, which, in fact, are never attained; so that though we find but little of the knowledge of God, and of his providence, in many nations, which never enjoyed the light of revelation, it does not follow
that

that nature did not contain and teach those lessons, and that men had not the means of learning them, provided they had made the most of the light they had, and of the powers that were given them.

I shall, therefore, include under the head of *natural religion*, all that can be demonstrated, or proved to be true by natural reason, though it was never, in fact, discovered by it; and even though it be probable that mankind would never have known it without the assistance of revelation. Thus the doctrine of a future state may be called a doctrine of natural religion, if when we have had the first knowledge of it from divine revelation, we can afterwards show that the expectation of it was probable from the light of nature, and that present appearances are, upon the whole, favourable to the supposition of it.

SECTION I.

Of the existence of God, and those attributes which are deduced from his being considered as uncaused himself, and the cause of every thing else.

WHEN we say there is a GOD, we mean that there is an intelligent designing cause of what we see in the world around us, and a being who was himself uncaused. Unless we have re-

course to this supposition, we cannot account for present appearances ; for there is an evident incapacity in every thing we see of being the cause of its own existence, or of the existence of other things. Though, in one sense, some things are the causes of others, yet they are only so in part ; and when we give sufficient attention to their nature, we shall see, that it is very improperly that they are termed *causes* at all : for when we have allowed all that we can to their influence and operation, there is still something that must be referred to a prior and superior cause. Thus we say that a proper soil, together with the influences of the sun and the rain, are the causes of the growth of plants ; but, in fact, all that we mean, and all that, in strictness, we ought to say, is, that according to the present constitution of things, plants could not grow but in those circumstances ; for, if there had not been a body previously organized like a plant, and if there had not existed what we call *a constitution of nature*, in consequence of which plants are disposed to thrive by the influence of the soil, the sun, and the rain, those circumstances would have signified nothing ; and the fitness of the organs of a plant to receive nourishment from the soil, the rain, and the sun, is a proof of such wisdom and design, as those bodies are evidently destitute of. If the fitting of a suit of cloaths to the body of a man be an argument

ment of *contrivance*, and consequently prove the existence of an intelligent agent, much more is the fitness of a thousand things to a thousand other things in the system of nature a proof of an intelligent designing cause; and this intelligent cause we call GOD.

If, for argument's sake, we should admit that the immediate author of this world was not himself the first cause, but that he derived his being and powers from some other being, superior to him; still in tracing the cause of this being, and the cause of his cause, &c. we shall at length be constrained to acknowledge a *first cause*, one who is himself uncaused, and who derives his being and cause from no superior whatever.

It must be acknowledged, however, that our faculties are unequal to the comprehension of this subject. Being used to pass from effects to causes, and being used to look for a cause adequate to the thing caused, and consequently to expect a greater cause for a greater effect, it is natural to suppose, that, if the things we see, which we say are the production of divine power, required a cause, the divine being himself must have required a greater cause. But this train of reasoning would lead us into a manifest absurdity, in inquiring for a higher and a higher cause *ad infinitum*. It may, perhaps, be true, though we cannot distinctly see it to be so, that as all *finite* things require a cause, *infinite*

admit of none. It is evident, that nothing can *begin* to be without a cause; but it by no means follows from thence, that that must have had a cause which had *no beginning*. But whatever there may be in this conjecture, we are constrained, in pursuing the train of causes and effects, to stop at last at something uncaused.

That any being should be *self created* is evidently absurd, because that would suppose that he had a being before he had, or that he existed, and did not exist at the same time. For want of clearer knowledge of this subject, we are obliged to content ourselves with terms that convey only *negative* ideas, and to say that God is a being *uncreated* or *uncaused*; and this is all that we mean when we sometimes say that he is *self existent*.

It has been said by some, that if we suppose an *infinite succession* of finite beings, there will be no necessity to admit any thing to have been uncaused. The race of men, for instance, may have been from eternity, no individual of the species being much superior to the rest. But this supposition only involves the question in more obscurity, and does not approach, in the least, to the solution of any difficulty. For if we carry this imaginary succession ever so far back in our ideas, we are in just the same situation as when we set out; for we are still considering a species of beings who cannot so much as comprehend even their own make and
consti-

constitution; and we are, therefore, still in want of some being who was capable of thoroughly knowing, and of forming them, and also of adapting the various parts of their bodies, and the faculties of their minds, to the sphere of life in which they act. In fact, an infinite *succession* of finite beings as much requires a cause, as a *single* finite being; and we have as little satisfaction in considering one of them as uncaused, as we have in considering the other.

It was said, by the Epicureans of old, that all things were formed by the *fortuitous concurrence of atoms*, that, originally, there were particles of all kinds floating at random in infinite space; and that, since certain combinations of particles constitute all bodies, and since, in infinite time, these particles must have been combined in all possible ways, the present system at length arose, without any designing cause. But, still, it may be asked, how could these atoms *move* without a *mover*; and what could have arisen from their combinations, but mere heaps of matter, of different forms and sizes. They could, of themselves, have had no power of acting upon one another, as bodies now have, by such properties as magnetism, electricity, gravitation, &c. unless these powers had been communicated to them by some superior being.

It is no wonder, that we feel, and must acknowledge the imperfection of our faculties, when

we are employed upon such a subject as this. We are involved in inextricable difficulties in considering the origin, as we may say, of the *works* of God. It is impossible that we should conceive how creation should have been coeval with its maker; and yet, if we admit that there ever was a time when nothing existed, besides the divine being himself, we must suppose a whole eternity to have preceded any act of creation; an eternity in which the divine being was possessed of the power and disposition to create, and to make happy, without once exerting them; or that a reason for creating must have occurred to him after the lapse of a whole eternity, which had not occurred before; and these seem to be greater difficulties than the other. Upon the whole, it seems to be the most agreeable to reason, though it be altogether incomprehensible by our reason, that there never was a time when this great uncaused being did not exert his perfections, in giving life and happiness to his offspring. We shall, also, find no greater difficulty in admitting, that the creation, as it had no beginning, so neither has it any *bounds*; but that infinite space is replenished with worlds, in which the power, wisdom, and goodness of God always have been, and always will be displayed.

There seems to be no difficulty in these amazing suppositions, except what arises from the imperfection

fection of our faculties; and if we reject these, we must of necessity adopt other suppositions, still more improbable, and involve ourselves in much greater difficulties. It is, indeed, impossible for us to conceive, in an adequate manner, concerning any thing that is infinite, or even to express ourselves concerning them without falling into seeming absurdities. If we say that it is impossible that the works of God should have been from eternity, we may say the same concerning any particular thought in the divine mind, or even concerning any particular moment of time in the eternity that has preceded us; for these are all of the nature of particular *events*, which must have taken place at some definite time, or at some precise given distance from the present moment. But as we are sure that the divine being himself, and *duration* itself, must have been without beginning, notwithstanding this argument; the works of God may also have been without beginning, notwithstanding the same argument. It may make this difficulty the easier to us, to consider that *thinking* and *acting*, or *creating*, may be the same thing with God.

So little are our minds equal to these speculations, that though we all agree, that an infinite duration must have preceded the present moment, and that another infinite duration must necessarily follow it; and though the former of these is con-

tinually receiving additions, which is, in our idea, the same thing as its growing continually larger; and the latter is constantly suffering as great diminutions, which in our idea, is the same thing as its growing continually less; yet we are forced to acknowledge that they both ever have been, and always must be exactly equal; neither of them being at any time conceivably greater, or less than the other. Nay we cannot conceive how both these eternities, added together, can be greater than either of them separately taken.

Having demonstrated the existence of God, as the first cause, the creator, and disposer of all things; we are naturally led to inquire, in the next place, what properties or attributes he is possessed of. Now these naturally divide themselves into *two classes*; being either such as flow from his being considered as the original cause of all things, or such as the particular nature of the works of which he is the author lead us to ascribe to him.

SECTION II.

Of those attributes of the deity which are deduced from the consideration of his being the original cause of all things.

WITHOUT any particular regard to the works of God, we cannot but conclude that the original cause of all things must have been

been *eternal*; for, since nothing can begin to exist without a cause, if there ever had been a time when nothing existed, nothing could have existed at present.

Secondly, this original cause must likewise be *immutable*, or not subject to change. We seem to require no other proof of this, than the impossibility of conceiving whence a change could arise in a being uncaused. If there was no cause of his existence itself, it seems to follow, that there could be no cause of a change in the manner of his existence; so that whatever he was originally, he must for ever continue to be. Besides, a capacity of producing a change in any being or thing, implies something prior and superior, something that can control, and that is incapable of being resisted; which can only be true of the supreme cause itself.

The immutability of the divine being, or his being incapable of being acted upon, or controlled by any other, is what we mean when we say that he is an *independent* being, if by this term we mean any thing more than his being uncaused.

SECTION III.

Of those attributes of the divine being which the consideration of his works leads us to ascribe to him.

THAT God is *eternal*, and *immutable*, follows necessarily, as we have seen, from his being *uncaused*; but if we consider the *effects* of which he is the cause, or, in other words, the *works* of which he is the author, we shall be led to ascribe to him other attributes, particularly those of *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*; and consequently all the attributes which are necessarily connected with, or flow from them.

If we call a being *powerful*, when he is able to produce great effects, or to accomplish great works, we cannot avoid ascribing this attribute to God, as the author of every thing that we behold; and when we consider the apparent greatness, variety, and extent of the works of God, in the whole frame of nature; as in the sun, moon, and stars; in the earth which we inhabit, and in the vegetables and animals which it contains, together with the powers of reason and understanding possessed by man, we cannot suppose any effect to which the divine power is not equal; and therefore we are authorised to say that it is *infinite*, or capable of producing any thing, that is not in its
OWN

own nature impossible; so that whatever purposes the divine being forms, he is always able to execute.

The *designs* of such a being as this, who cannot be controlled in the execution of any of his purposes, would be very obvious to us if we could comprehend his works, or see the issue of them; but this we cannot do with respect to the works of God, which are both incomprehensible by our finite understandings, and also are not yet compleated; for as far as they are subject to our inspection, they are evidently in a progress to something more perfect. Yet from the *subordinate parts* of this great machine of the universe, which we can in some measure understand, and which are compleated; and also from the manifest *tendency* of things, we may safely conclude, that the great design of the divine being, in all the works of his hands, was to produce happiness.

That the world is in a state of improvement is very evident in the human species, which is the most distinguished part of it. Knowledge, and a variety of improvements depending upon knowledge (all of which are directly or indirectly subservient to happiness) have been increasing from the time of our earliest acquaintance with history to the present; and in the last century this progress has been amazingly rapid. By means of increasing commerce, the valuable productions of the
earth

earth become more equally distributed, and by improvements in agriculture they are continually multiplied, to the great advantage of the whole family of mankind.

It is partly in consequence of this improvement of the human species, as we may call it, that the earth itself is in a state of improvement, the cultivated parts continually gaining ground on the uncultivated ones; by which means, besides many other advantages, even the inclemencies of the weather are, in some measure, lessened, and the world becomes a more healthy and pleasurable abode for its most important inhabitants. If things proceed as they have done in these respects, the earth will become a paradise, compared to what it was formerly, or with what it is at present.

It is a considerable evidence of the goodness of God, that the inanimate parts of nature, as the surface of the earth, the air, water, salts, minerals, &c. are adapted to answer the purposes of vegetable and animal life, which abounds every where; and the former of these is evidently subservient to the latter; all the vegetables that we are acquainted with either directly contributing to the support of animal life, or being, in some other way, useful to it; and all animals are furnished with a variety of appetites and powers, which continually prompt

prompt them to *seek*, and enable them to *enjoy* some kind of happiness.

It seems to be an evident argument that the author of all things intended the animal creation to be happy, that, when their powers are in their full strength, and exercise, they are always happy; health and enjoyment having a natural and necessary connection through the whole system of nature; whereas it can hardly be imagined, but that a malevolent being, or one who should have made creatures with a design to make them miserable, would have constituted them so, that when any creature was the most perfect, it would have been the most unhappy.

It agrees with the supposition of the benevolence of the divine being, that there is the most ample provision made for the happiness of those creatures which are naturally capable of the most enjoyment, particularly the human species. We have a far greater variety and extent of powers, both of action and enjoyment, than any other inhabitants of the earth; and the world abounds with more sources of happiness to us than to any other order of beings upon it. So perfectly adapted are the inanimate, the vegetable, and the animal world to the occasions and purposes of man, that we may almost say, that every thing was made for our use; and though there are both plants and animals, which, in some applications, are noxious to us,
yet

yet, in time, we come to find out their uses, and learn to avail ourselves of their extraordinary powers.

There are many things in the system of nature, as tempests, lightning, diseases, and death, which greatly terrify and annoy us, and which are often the occasion of much pain and distress; but these evils are only partial; and when the whole system, of which they are a part, and a necessary consequence, is considered, it will be found to be, as far as we can judge, the best, and the most friendly to us upon the whole; and that no other *general laws*, which should obviate and exclude these evils, would have been productive of so much happiness. And it should be a rule with us, when we are considering any particular thing in the system of nature, to take in every thing that is necessarily connected with it, and every thing that we should lose if we were deprived of it; so that if, upon the whole, we should, in that case, gain more than we should lose, we must pronounce the thing complained of to be beneficial to us, and should thankfully bear the evil, for the sake of the greater good that accompanies it. Fire, for instance, is the occasion of a great deal of mischief and distress in the world, but this is not to be compared with the benefits that we derive from the use of that element.

It

It may be said, indeed, that the divine being might have separated these things, and, if he had been perfectly benevolent, might have given us the good unmixed with evil. But there are many pains and evils which are useful to us, and upon the whole give us a greater enjoyment of life, as being pains and evils in themselves. It is a common observation, that many persons are much happier, in a variety of respects, in the prime of life, and especially towards the close of it, for the pains and the hardships they suffered at their entrance upon it. The difficulties we meet with contribute to strengthen the mind, by furnishing proper exercise both for our passions and our understandings, and they also heighten our relish of the good that we meet with. The more attention we give to evils of all kinds, the more good do we see to accompany them, or to follow them; so that, for any thing that we know, a better system, that is, a system abounding with more happiness, could not have been made than this, even as it is at present; and much more if we suppose, what is very probable, a tendency to much greater happiness in the completion of the whole scheme.

One of the greatest and most striking evils in the system of nature, is that one animal should be made to prey upon another, as lions, tigers, wolves, eagles, serpents, and other beasts, birds, and insects of prey; and, at first sight, it might
seem

seem more agreeable to benevolence, to have formed no such carnivorous creatures; as every animal would then have lived without fear or apprehension, and the world, as we are apt to imagine, would have been the scene of universal peace and joy. But this is the conclusion of a superficial observer. For it may easily be demonstrated, that there is more happiness in the present system than there would have been in that imaginary one; and, therefore, that this constitution of things, notwithstanding its inconveniences, must have appeared preferable in the eye of a benevolent being.

If all the species of animals had been suffered to multiply without interfering with one another, they would all have soon been involved in famine and distress; and whenever they died, their carcases would have infected the air, and have made it nauseous and unhealthy; whereas, at present, all animals have, in general, a sufficiency of food; they suffer very little from the fear of danger; while they are in their vigour, they are pretty well able to defend themselves, or to provide for their safety by flight; when they grow feeble, and life would become a burthen, they serve to support the life and vigour of animals of a different species; and the pangs of a sudden and violent death are not so dreadful as those that are occasioned by lingering sickness. If any animals die by a natural death,

death, there are other animals enow, quadrupeds, birds, and insects, that are ready to seize upon the carcase; and to them it is, in the most putrid state, grateful and wholesome food.

Man is a carnivorous animal, but it is happy for the animals which he lives upon that he is so. What a number of cows, and sheep, and fowls, do we feed, attend upon, and make happy, which, otherwise, would either have had no existence at all, or a very miserable one; and what is a sudden and unexpected death, compared with their previous enjoyment; with a life spent in far greater pleasure and satisfaction than they could otherwise have known?

Farther, all the evils we complain of are the result of what we call *general laws*, in consequence of which the same events invariably follow from the same previous circumstances; and without those general laws, all would be uncertainty and confusion. Thus it follows from the general law of gravitation, that bodies heavier than the air will, when unsupported, fall to the ground. Now cannot we conceive that it is better, upon the whole, that this law of nature, which is productive of a thousand benefits every moment, and whereby the whole earth, and probably the whole universe is held together, should be preserved invariably, than that it should be suspended whenever any temporary inconvenience would arise from

it;

it ; as whenever a man should step from a precipice, to prevent his breaking his bones, or being dashed to pieces ? If there were no general laws of nature, causing the same effects to follow from the same previous circumstances, there would be no exercise for the wisdom and understanding of intelligent beings ; and, consequently, we should not be in circumstances in which we could arrive at the proper perfection and happiness of our natures. If there were no general laws, we could not know what events to expect, or depend upon, in consequence of any thing we did. We could have none of that pleasure and satisfaction that we now have in contemplating the course of nature, which might be one thing to-day, and another to-morrow ; and as no man could lay a scheme with a prospect of accomplishing it, we should soon become listless and indifferent to every thing, and consequently unhappy.

It may be said, that we might have been differently constituted, so as to have been happy in a world not governed by general laws, and not liable to partial evils. But there is no end of those suppositions, which, for any thing that we can tell, may be, in their own nature, impossible. All that we can do, in these difficult speculations, is to consider the connections and tendencies of things as they now are ; and if we see reason to conclude that, *ceteris manentibus*, nothing could be changed for

for the better, we may also conclude that the *system itself* could not be changed for a better; since the same wisdom that has so perfectly adapted the various parts of the same scheme, so as to make it productive of the most happiness, may well be supposed to have made choice of *the scheme itself*, as calculated to contain the most happiness. Even divine power cannot produce impossibilities; and for any thing that we know, it may be as naturally impossible to execute any scheme free from the inconveniences, that we complain of in this, as that *two and two* should make more than *four*.

Upon the whole, the face of things is such as gives us abundant reason to conclude, that God made every thing with a view to the happiness of his creatures and offspring. And we are confirmed in this supposition, from considering the utter impossibility of conceiving of any end that could be answered to himself in the misery of his creatures; whereas the divine being may be conceived to rejoice in, and perhaps receive pleasure from the happiness of all around him. This, however, is the most *honourable* idea that we can form of any being; and can it be supposed that our maker would have constituted us in such a manner, as that our natural ideas of perfection and excellence should not be applicable to the essential attributes of his own nature? Our natural approbation of love and benevolence is, therefore, a proof of the
divine

divine benevolence, as it cannot be supposed that he should have made us to hate, and not to love himself.

That every part of so complex a system as this should be so formed, as to conspire to promote this one great end, namely, the happiness of the creation, is a clear proof of the *wisdom* of God. The proper evidence of *design*, or *contrivance* is such a fitness of means to gain any end, that the correspondence between them cannot be supposed to be the result of what we call *accident*, or *chance*. Now there are so many adaptations of one thing to another in the system of nature, that the idea of chance is altogether excluded; insomuch, that there is reason enough to conclude, that every thing has its proper use, by means of a designed reference to something else; and that nothing has been made, or is disposed of, but to answer a good and benevolent purpose. And the more closely we inspect the works of God, the more exquisite art and contrivance do we discover in them. This is acknowledged by all persons who have made any part of nature their particular study, whether they have been of a religious turn of mind, or not.

We see the greatest wisdom in the distribution of light and heat to the different parts of the earth, by means of the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and its obliquity to the plane in which it moves;

moves ; so that every climate is not only habitable by men whose constitutions are adapted to it, but every part of the world may be visited by the inhabitants of any other place, and there is no country which the same person is not capable of accustoming himself to, and making tolerable, if not agreeable to him, in a reasonable space of time.

We see the greatest wisdom in the variation of the seasons of the year in the same place, in the provision that is made for watering as well as warming the soil, so as to prepare it for the growth of the various kinds of vegetables that derive their nourishment from it. The wisdom of God appears in adapting the constitutions of vegetables and animals to the climates they were intended to inhabit, in giving all animals the proper means of providing their food, and the necessary powers either of attacking others, or securing themselves by flight, or some other method of evading the pursuit of *their* enemies. The carnivorous and voracious animals have a degree of strength and courage suited to their occasions, whereby they are prompted to seize upon their prey, and are enabled to master and secure it ; and the weak have that degree of timidity, which keeps them attentive to every appearance of danger, and warns them to have recourse to some methods of securing themselves from it. We see the greatest wisdom

in the provision that is made in nature against the loss or extinction of any species of vegetables or animals, by their easy multiplication, according to the want there is of them. The most useful vegetables grow every where, without care or cultivation, as for example, the different kinds of grasses. Small and tame animals breed fast, whereas the large and carnivorous ones propagate very slowly, which keeps the demand on the one hand, and the consumption on the other, nearly equal.

The human body exhibits the clearest and the most numerous marks of wisdom and contrivance, whereby each part receives its proper nourishment, and is fitted for its proper functions; all of which are admirably adapted to our real occasions in life. How conveniently are the organs of all our senses disposed, how well secured, and how excellently adapted to their proper uses; and how exceedingly serviceable are all of them to us. We see the wisdom of God both in what we call the *instincts* of brutes, and the *reason* of man; each of these principles being exactly fitted to our several occasions.

We also see the wisdom of God in the natural *sanctions of virtue* in this world; so that those persons who addict themselves to vice and wickedness become miserable and wretched in the natural course of things, without any particular interposition

sition of providence; whereas virtue and integrity is generally rewarded with peace of mind, the approbation of our fellow creatures, and a reasonable share of security and success.

Could we see all the causes of the rise and fall of empires, and in what manner the happiness of mankind is connected with the great events in the history of the world, it is not to be doubted, but that we should see as much wisdom in the conduct of divine providence with respect to them; so as not to doubt (though we should not have been informed of it by revelation) *that the Lord God ruleth in the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomsoever he pleases*, and promoting his own wise and benevolent purposes by the disposition of them.

Lastly, it is an argument of the wisdom of God, that he has given wisdom to man and other creatures, for he could not give a power of which he was not himself possessed in a much more eminent degree.

These attributes of *power, wisdom, and goodness*, are all that we can *directly* demonstrate from the consideration of the works of God. Every other of his attributes is deduced from these; and since the divine being has been proved to be powerful, wise, and good, he must likewise be whatever a powerful, wise, and good being cannot but be. These, therefore, together with the attributes of *self-existence, eternity, and unchangeableness*, may be called

the *primary* attributes of God ; and all others may be called *secondary* ones, or such as depend upon, and flow from those that are primary.

SECTION IV.

Of those attributes of God which are deduced from the consideration of his power, wisdom, and goodness jointly.

AS the matter of which the world consists can only be moved and acted upon, and is altogether incapable of moving itself, or of acting ; so all the *powers of nature*, or the tendencies of things to their different motions and operations, can only be the effect of the divine energy, perpetually acting upon them, and causing them to have certain tendencies and effects. A stone, for instance, can no more move, or tend downwards, that is, towards the earth, of itself, than it can move or tend upwards, that is, from the earth. That it does tend downwards, or towards the earth, must, therefore, be owing to the divine energy, an energy without which the power of gravitation would cease, and the whole frame of the earth be dissolved.

It follows from these principles, that no powers of nature can take place, and that no creature
 whatever

whatever can exist, without the divine agency; so that we can no more *continue*, than we could *begin* to exist without the divine will.

God, having made all things, and exerted his influence over all things, must know all things, and consequently be *omniscient*. Also, since he not only ordained, but constantly supports all the laws of nature, he must be able to foresee what will be the result of them, at any distance of time; just as a man who makes a clock can tell when it will strike. All future events, therefore, must be as perfectly known to the divine mind as those that are present; and as we cannot conceive that he should be liable to forgetfulness, we may conclude that all things, past, present, and to come, are equally known to him; so that his knowledge is *infinite*.

The divine being, knowing all things, and exerting his influence on all the works of his hands, whereby he supports the existence of every thing that he has made, and maintains the laws which he has established in nature, must be, in a proper sense of the term, *omnipresent*.

Since God made all things to answer an important end, namely, the happiness of his creatures; since his power is so great, that nothing can be too difficult for him; since his knowledge is so extensive, that nothing can pass unnoticed by him; and since the minutest things in the creation, and

the most inconsiderable events, may affect the end that he has in view, his *providence* must necessarily extend to all his works; and we may conclude that he constantly attends to every individual of his creatures, and out of every evil that befalls any of them produces good to themselves or others.

Since God is omnipresent without being the object of any of our senses, he comes under the description of what we call a *spirit*, or something that is *immaterial*. It must, however, be in his power to make his presence manifest to the human senses, if the purposes of his providence should require it.

We cannot help conceiving that any being must be *happy* when he accomplishes all his designs. The divine being, therefore, having power and wisdom to execute all his designs, we infer that he must be happy, and perfectly so. Also, though we cannot say that the consequence is demonstrable, we cannot but think that he who makes us happy, and whose sole end in creating us was to make us happy, must be happy himself, and in a greater degree than we are capable of being.

In all the preceding course of reasoning, we have only argued from what we see, and have supposed nothing more than is necessary to account for what we see; and as a cause is necessary, but not *more causes* than one, we cannot conclude that
there

there are more Gods than *one*, unless some other kind of proof can be brought for it.

Besides, there is such a perfect *harmony* and *uniformity* in the works of nature, and one part so exactly fits and corresponds to another, that there must have been a perfect *uniformity of design* in the whole, which hardly admits of more than one being as the former of it, and presiding over it. It was only the mixture of evil in the world that was the reason why some of the heathens supposed that there are *two principles* in nature, the one the source of good, and the other of evil, the one benevolent, and the other malevolent.

These two principles, they supposed to be at present continually struggling against one another, though it was their opinion that the good would finally prevail. But we have seen that all the evil that there is in the world is a necessary part of the whole scheme, and inseparable from it; so that the good and the evil must have had the same author. Besides, they both conspire to the same end, the happiness of the creation.

Upon the whole, we may remain perfectly satisfied, that there is but *one God*, possessed of all the perfections that have been described; and were our minds equal to this subject, I doubt not but that we should be able to see, that there *could have been* but one, and that two Gods would have been impossible; as much so, as that there should be in

nature two universal infinite spaces, or two eternities, both before and after the present moment. But because we are incapable of judging what *must have been* in this case, we are content to argue from what *is*; and upon this ground we have reason enough to conclude that *God is one*.

Since the divine power and wisdom are so amazingly great, that we cannot conceive any effect to which they are not equal; nay, since we are *able to comprehend but* a very small part of the actual effects of the power and wisdom of God, and new views are continually opening to us, which are continually exciting greater admiration, there can be no danger of our exceeding the truth, if we endeavour to conceive of these perfections of God as *infinite*. Indeed we have sufficient reason to believe that, strictly speaking, they are so; though we are not able directly to demonstrate it: because we, being finite, cannot comprehend any thing that is infinite; and not being able to comprehend an infinite effect, we cannot fully demonstrate infinity in the cause. The *extent*, and other properties of the divine goodness, I shall consider more at large.

SECTION V.

Of the properties of the divine goodness.

IF goodness, or benevolence, be the great governing principle, or spring of action in the divine being, happiness must prevail amongst those of his creatures that are capable of it. If it were possible that there should be, upon the whole, more misery than happiness in the creation, it would be an argument that the supreme being was malevolent. For since all the tendencies and issues of things were, from the first, perfectly known to him, he would, supposing him to be benevolent, have produced no system at all, rather than one in which misery might prevail. No scheme, therefore, which supposes the greater number of the creatures of God to be miserable upon the whole, can be consistent with the supposition of the divine benevolence. The *means*, or the *manner* by which the creatures of God are involved in misery makes no difference in this case; for if it arise even from themselves, it arises from the nature that God has given them. If he had foreseen that the constitution which he gave them would, in the circumstances in which he placed them, issue in their final ruin, he would not have given them that constitution, or have disposed of them

in that manner; unless he had intended that they should be finally miserable; that is, unless he himself had taken pleasure in misery, in consequence of his being of a malevolent disposition.

It must be impossible, for the same reason, that the divine being should be capable of sacrificing the interests of a *greater number*, to that of a *few* of his creatures; though it may, perhaps, be necessary, that the interests of a few give place to that of a greater number. For if he had a desire to produce happiness *at all*, it seems to be an evident consequence, that he must prefer a greater degree of happiness to a less; and a greater sum of happiness can exist in a greater number, than in a smaller.

For the same reason, also, the goodness of God must be *impartial*. Since the supreme being stands in an equal relation to all his creatures and offspring, he must be incapable of that kind of partiality, by which we often give the preference to one person above another. There must be a good reason for every thing that looks like *preference* in the conduct and government of God; and no reason can be a good one, with respect to a benevolent being, but what is founded upon benevolence. If, therefore, some creatures enjoy more happiness than others, it must be because the happiness of the creation in general requires that they
should

should have that preference, and because a less sum of good would have been produced upon any other disposition of things.

Thus it is probable that a variety in the ranks of creatures, whereby some have a much greater capacity of happiness than others, and are therefore more favoured by divine providence than others, makes a better system, and one more favourable to general happiness, than any other, in which there should have been a perfect equality in all advantages and enjoyments. We are not, therefore, to say that God is partial to men, because they have greater powers, and enjoy more happiness than worms; but must suppose, that the system in which there was provision for the greatest sum of happiness required that there should be some creatures in the rank of men, and others in the rank of worms; and that each has reason to rejoice in the divine goodness, though they partake of it in different degrees. Indeed, it were absurd to suppose, that, properly speaking, there was any thing like preference in the divine being chusing to make *this* a man, and *the other* a worm; because they had no being before they were created; and therefore it could not be any thing like affection to the one more than the other that determined his conduct. In reality it is improper to say that God chose to make *this* a man, and *that* a worm; for the

proper expression is, that he chose to make *a man*, and *a worm*.

Among creatures of the same general class or rank, there may be differences in advantages and in happiness; but they must be founded on the same considerations with the differences in the ranks themselves; that is, it must be favourable to the happiness of the whole that there should be those differences; and it cannot arise from any arbitrary or partial preference of one to another, independent of a regard to the happiness of the whole; which is what we mean by an arbitrary and partial affection.

There is a variety of cases in which we may plainly see, that the happiness of one has a reference to, and is productive of the happiness of others; as in the principle of benevolence, whereby we are naturally disposed to rejoice in the happiness of others. For we cannot procure ourselves these sympathetic pleasures, at least, in any considerable degree, without contributing to the happiness of those around us. This, being a source of pleasure to ourselves, is a constant motive to benevolent actions.

Lastly, if God be benevolent at all, he must be *infinitely* so; at least we can see no reason why he should wish to make his creation happy *at all*, and not wish to make it as happy *as possible*. If this be the case, the reason why all his creatures are not,

at

at all times, as happy as their natures can bear, must be because *variety* and a *gradual advance* are, in the nature of things, necessary to their complete and final happiness.

Besides, as there is reason to believe that the other perfections of God, his wisdom, power, &c. are infinite, it seems to follow, by analogy, that his goodness must be so too, though we may not be able to prove it demonstrably and consequentially.

It must be owned to be impossible completely to answer every objection that may be made to the supposition of the infinite benevolence of God; for, supposing all his creatures to be constantly happy, still, as there are *degrees of happiness*, it may be asked, why, if their maker be infinitely benevolent, do not his creatures enjoy a higher degree of it. But this question may always be asked, so long as the happiness of any creature is only *finite*, that is less than infinite, or less than the happiness of God himself, which, in its own nature it must necessarily be. It must be consistent, therefore, even with the infinite benevolence of God, that his creatures, which are necessarily finite, be finitely, that is imperfectly happy. And when all the circumstances relating to any being are considered at once, as they are by the divine mind, positive evils have only the same effect as a diminution of positive good, being ba-

lanced, as it were, against a degree of good to which it was equivalent; so that the overplus of happiness which falls to the share of any being, after allowance has been made for the evils which he suffers, is to be considered as his share of *unmixed happiness*.

It is only owing to our imperfection, or the want of *comprehension of mind* (in which, however, we advance every day) that we are not able to make all our pleasures and pains perfectly to *coalesce*, so as that we shall be affected by the difference only. And whenever we shall be arrived at this state; whenever, by long experience, we shall be able to connect in our minds the ideas of all the things which are causes and effects to one another, all partial evils will absolutely vanish in the contemplation of the greater good with which they are connected. This will be perfectly the case with respect to all *intellectual* pleasures and pains, and even *painful sensations*, will be much moderated, and more tolerable under the lively persuasion of their contributing to our happiness on the whole. However, in the light in which the divine being, who has this perfect comprehension, views his works (and this must be the true light in which they ought to be considered) there is this perfect coincidence of all things that are connected with, and subservient to one another; so that, since all evils are necessarily connected with some good, and
generally

generally are directly productive of it, all the works of God, appear to him *at all times* very good, happiness greatly abounding upon the whole. And since the works of God are infinite, he contemplates an infinity of happiness, of his own production, and, in his eye, happiness unmixed with evil.

This conclusion, however, is hardly consistent with the supposition that any of the creatures of God are necessarily miserable in the whole of their existence. In the ideas of such creatures, even when they have arrived at the most perfect comprehension of mind, their being must seem a curse to them, and the author of it will be considered as malevolent with respect to them, though not so to others.

It seems, likewise, to be a reflection upon the *wisdom* of God, that he should not be able to produce the happiness of some, without the final misery of others; and so incapable are we of conceiving how the latter of these can be necessary to the former; that, if we retain the idea of the divine benevolence, together with that of his power and wisdom in any high degree, we cannot but reject the supposition. That any of the creatures of God should be finally, and upon the whole, miserable, cannot be a pleasing circumstance to their benevolent author. Nay, it must, in its own nature, be the last means that he would have

have recourse to, to gain his end; because, as far as it prevails, it is directly opposed to his end. We may, therefore, rest satisfied, that there is no such *blot* in the creation as this; but that all the creatures of God are intended by him to be happy upon the whole. He stands in an equal relation to them all, a relation in which they must all have reason to rejoice. He is their common father, protector, and friend.

SECTION VI.

Of the moral perfections of God deduced from his goodness.

THE power and wisdom of God, together with those attributes which are derived from them, and also those which are deduced from his being considered as an uncaused being, may be termed his *natural* perfections; whereas his benevolence, and those other attributes which are deduced from it, are more properly termed his *moral* perfections; because they lead to such conduct as determines what we commonly call *moral character* in men.

The source of all the moral perfections of God seems to be his benevolence; and indeed there is no occasion to suppose him to be influenced by any other

other principle, in order to account for all that we see. Every other truly venerable or amiable attribute can be nothing but a *modification* of this. A perfectly good, or benevolent being, must be, in every other respect, whatever can be the object of our reverence, or our love. Indeed the connection of all the moral virtues, and the derivation of them from the single principle of benevolence are easily traced, even in human characters.

1. If a magistrate be benevolent, that is, if he really consult the happiness of his subjects, he must be *just*, or take notice of crimes, and punish the criminals. Otherwise, he would be cruel to the whole, and especially to the innocent, who would be continually liable to oppression, if there were no restraint of this kind.

2. But whenever an offence can be overlooked, and no injury accrue from it, either to the offender himself, or to others, the benevolence of God, as well as that of a human magistrate, will require him to be *merciful*; so that implacability, or a desire of revenging an affront, without any regard to the prevention of farther evil, must be carefully excluded from the character of the divine being. He must delight in mercy, because he wishes to promote happiness, though he may be under the necessity of punishing obstinate offenders, in order to restrain vice and misery.

There

There is more room for the display of mercy in the divine government than in that of men ; because men, not being able to distinguish true repentance from the appearance of it, and pretences to it, must make but few deviations from general rules, lest they should increase crimes and hypocrisy ; whereas the secrets of all hearts being open to God, he cannot be imposed upon by any pretences ; so that if an offender be truly penitent, and it is known to him that he will not abuse his goodness, he can receive him into favour, without apprehending any inconvenience whatever. Such cases as these, how dangerous soever the precedent might be in human governments, are not liable to be abused in the perfect administration of the divine being. Justice and mercy, therefore, are equally attributes of the divine being, and equally deducible from his goodness or benevolence ; both, in their places, being necessary to promote the happiness of his creation.

3. As perfect benevolence is the rule of the divine conduct, and leads him to be both just and merciful, so we cannot but conceive that he must govern his conduct by every other rule that we find to be equally necessary to the well-being of society, particularly that of truth, or *veracity*. All human confidence would cease if we could not depend upon one another's word ; and, in those circumstances, every advantage of society would

would be lost. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the divine being, if he should think proper to have any intercourse with his creatures, must be equally removed from a possibility of attempting to impose upon them.

4. As to those vices which arise from the irregular indulgence of our appetites and passions, we can have no idea of the possibility of their having any place in the divine being. We therefore conclude that he is, in all respects, *holy*, as well as just and good.

There are, also, some evidences of the justice and mercy of God in the course of providence. The constitution of human nature and of the world is such, that men cannot long persist in any species of wickedness without being sufferers in consequence of it. Intemperance lays the foundation for many painful and dangerous diseases. Every species of malevolence and inhumanity consists of uneasy sensations, and exposes the person in whom they are predominant to the hatred and ill offices of his fellow creatures. Want of veracity destroys a man's credit in society; and all vices may make men subject to contempt, or dislike; whereas the habitual practice of the contrary virtues promotes health of body and peace of mind; and, in general, they insure to him the esteem and good offices of all those with whom he is connected.

Now,

Now, since these evils which attend upon vice, and this happiness which results from virtue, are the divine appointment (since they take place in consequence of his constitution of the course of nature) they may be considered as the natural punishments of vice, and the natural rewards of virtue, distributed according to the rules of justice and equity, and intended to inculcate the most useful moral lessons on all his intelligent offspring, the subjects of his moral government.

We, also, see something like the exercise of *mercy* in the conduct of the divine providence; since the natural punishments of vice seldom take place immediately, but leave a man room to recollect, and recover himself; and, if, after a man *has* been addicted to vice, he become truly reformed, the inconveniences he has brought upon himself are, in general, either removed, or mitigated; so that he finds his condition the better for it.

It may, also, according to the reasoning applied in a former case, be considered as an argument for all the perfections of God, that we are so formed, that we cannot but approve of, and esteem every branch of virtue. For it cannot be supposed that our maker would have formed us in such a manner, as that he himself should be the object of our dislike and abhorrence. Our natural love of goodness and virtue, therefore, is a proof that every branch of it enters into the character of the divine being,

being, and consequently that those qualities are the objects of his favour and approbation.

Since, however, all the moral perfections of God are derived from his benevolence; so that holiness, justice, mercy, and truth, are in him only modifications, as it were, of simple goodness; we should endeavour to conceive of him, as much as possible, according to his real nature; considering benevolence as his sole ruling principle, and the proper spring of all his actions. This is, also, the most *honourable* and the most *amiable* light in which we can view him, remembering that goodness necessarily implies what we call justice, though its natural form be that of mercy.

Upon the whole, it must be acknowledged, that it is but a very imperfect idea that we can form of the *moral* perfections of God from the light of nature. It hardly amounts to what may be called an idea of his *character*. We know nothing of God by the light of nature but through the medium of his works, and these are such as we cannot fully comprehend; both the efficient and the final causes being, in many cases, unknown to us: whereas the clearer ideas we have of the characters of men, are acquired from a reflection upon such parts of their conduct as we can both fully comprehend, and are capable of ourselves; so that we can tell precisely how we should *feel* and be disposed,

posed, if we acted in the same manner. The knowledge, also, of the *manner in which men express themselves*, upon known occasions, is a great help to us in judging of what they feel, and consequently in investigating their proper character; and this is an advantage of which we are entirely destitute with respect to God, on the principles of the light of nature.

It is from *revelation* chiefly, if not only, that we get a just idea of what we may call the proper character of the divine being. There we may both hear his declarations, and see various specimens of his conduct, with respect to a variety of persons and occasions; by which means we have the best opportunity of entering, as it were, into his sentiments, perceiving his disposition, learning what are the objects of his approbation or dislike, in short, of gaining a proper and distinct idea of his *moral character*.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DUTY, AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF
MANKIND.

SECTION I.

Of the rule of right and wrong.

HAVING seen what it is that nature teaches us concerning GOD, our next inquiry respects the proper *rule of human conduct*, and our *expectations*, grounded upon that conduct. No man comes into the world to be idle. Every man is furnished with a variety of passions, which will continually engage him in some pursuit or other; and the great question we have to decide is what passions we ought to indulge, and what pursuits we ought to engage in. Now there are several very proper rules by which to form our judgment in this case; because there are several just objects that we ought to have in view in our conduct. It is very happy, however, that this variety in our views can never mislead us, since all the great ends we ought to keep in view are gained by the same means. They are, therefore, like so many different clues to lead to the same end; and in the following

following enquiry I shall make use of any one of them, or all of them, as it may happen that, in any particular case, they can be applied to the most advantage.

Strictly speaking, there are no more than two just and independent rules of human conduct, according to the light of nature, one of which is obedience to the will of God, and the other a regard to our own real happiness; for another rule, which is a regard to the good of others, exactly coincides with a regard to the will of God; since all that we know of the will of God, according to the light of nature, is his desire that all his creatures should be happy, and therefore that they should all contribute to the happiness of each other. In revelation we learn the will of God in a more direct method, and then obedience to God, and a regard to the good of others will be distinct and independent principles of action, though they both enjoin the same thing. The fourth, and last rule of human conduct, is a regard to the dictates of *conscience*. But this is only the substitute of the other principles, and, in fact, arises from them; prompting to right conduct on emergencies, where there is no time for reasoning or reflection; and where, consequently, no proper rule of conduct could be applied.

Having thus pointed out the proper distinction and connection of these rules, I shall consider each

each of them separately. The first object of enquiry, in order to investigate the proper rule of right and wrong, is what kind of conduct the divine being most approves.

Now the divine being, whose own object, as has been shewn, is the happiness of his creatures, will certainly most approve of those sentiments, and of that conduct of ours, by which that happiness is best provided for; and this conduct must deserve to be called *right* and *proper* in the strictest sense of the words. If we examine the workmanship of any artist, our only rule of judging of what is right or wrong, with respect to it, is its fitness to answer his design in making it. Whatever, in its structure, is adapted to gain that end, we immediately pronounce to be *as it should be*, and whatever obstructs his design, we pronounce to be *wrong*, and to want correction. The same method of judging may be transferred to the works of God; so that whatever it be, in the sentiments or conduct of men, that concurs with, and promotes the design of our maker, we must pronounce to be, therefore, *right*; and whatever tends to thwart and obstruct his end, we ought to call *wrong*: because, when the former prevails, the great object of the whole system is gained: whereas, when the latter takes place, that end and design is defeated.

2. On

2. On the other hand, if we were to form a rule for our conduct independent of any regard to the divine being, we should certainly conclude that it is the part of wisdom, to provide for our greatest happiness; and, consequently, that we should cherish those sentiments, and adopt that conduct, by which it will be best secured. But this rule must coincide with the former; because our happiness is an object with the divine being no less than it is with ourselves; for it has been shewn, that benevolence is the spring of all his actions, and that he made us to be happy.

3. Since, however, the divine goodness is general, and impartial; and he must, consequently, prefer the happiness of the *whole* to that of any *individuals*, it cannot be his pleasure, that we should consult our own interest, at the expence of that of others. Considering ourselves, therefore, not as separate individuals, but as members of society, another object that we ought to have in view is the welfare of our fellow creatures, and of mankind at large. But still there is no real disagreement among these different rules of conduct, because we are so made, as social beings, that every man provides the most effectually for his own happiness, when he cultivates those sentiments, and pursues that conduct, which, at the same time, most eminently conduce to the welfare of those with whom he is connected. Such is the wisdom of this

this admirable constitution, that every individual of the system gains his own ends, and those of his maker, by the same means.

The last rule is *conscience*, which is the result of a great variety of impressions, the conclusions of our own minds, and the opinions of others, respecting what is right and fit in our conduct, forming a set of maxims which are ready to be applied upon every emergency, where there would be no time for reason or reflection. Conscience, being a principle thus formed, is properly considered as a *substitute* for the three other rules, viz. a regard to the will of God, to our own greatest happiness, and the good of others, and it is, in fact, improved and corrected from time to time by having recourse to these rules. This principle of conscience, therefore, being, as it were, the result of all the other principles of our conduct united, must deserve to be considered as the guide of life, together with them; and its dictates, though they vary, in some measure, with education, and will be found to be, in some respects, different among different nations of the world, yet, in general, evidently concur in giving their sanction to the same rules of conduct, that are suggested by the three before-mentioned considerations. For, if we consider what kind of sentiments and conduct mankind in general will, without much reflection, and without hesitation,

pronounce to be right; if we consider what are the actions that we most esteem and admire in others, and that we reflect upon with the most satisfaction in ourselves, they will appear to be the same with those which tend to make ourselves and others the most truly happy.

Following these four guides, we shall find that temperance, or the due government of our passions, with respect to ourselves; justice, benevolence, and veracity with respect to others; together with gratitude, obedience, and resignation to God, ought to be most assiduously cultivated by us; as what are, at the same time, the most pleasing to our maker, the most conducive to our own happiness, and that of others, and the most agreeable to the natural and unperverted dictates of conscience.

That we are capable of governing ourselves by these rules, and, from a proper regard to motives, can voluntarily chuse and pursue that course of life which the will of God, a regard to our own happiness, to the good of society, and the dictates of our consciences, uniformly recommend to us, is sometimes expressed by saying that *we are the proper subjects of moral government*. Unless we suppose that men have this voluntary power over their actions, whereby they can, at pleasure, either obey or disobey the proper rule of life; that is, unless they be so constituted, that the proper motives

tives to right conduct can have a sufficient influence upon their minds, all religion is in vain. To what purpose can it be to give men a law, which it is not in their power to observe; or what propriety can there be either in rewarding them for actions to which they could not contribute, or in punishing them for offences which they could not help.

We may, therefore, take it for granted, as the first, and most fundamental principle of all religion, as necessary to our being the proper subjects of moral government, that we are equally capable of intending and doing both good and evil; and therefore that it is not in vain that laws are proposed to us, and motives are laid before us, both to persuade us to what is right, and to dissuade us from what is wrong, since it depends upon ourselves, whether we will be influenced by them or not.

If we observe the proper rules of conduct, or the laws of our natures, we shall secure to ourselves many solid advantages; and if we do not observe them, we entail upon ourselves many evils. These are, therefore, called the *punishments of vice*, and the former the *rewards of virtue*; and since they are dispensed by the providence of God, and take place according to his appointment, in the constitution of the course of nature; he is properly considered as our *moral governor*, and judge,

and we are said to be *accountable* to him for our conduct.

From a regard to the four rules of right and wrong, explained above, I shall now endeavour to analyze the sentiments, the passions, and affections of mankind, and lay down particular rules for our conduct in life.

SECTION II.

Of the different objects of pursuit, and the different passions and affections of men corresponding to them.

IN order to form a proper judgment concerning the conduct of man, as an individual, and a member of society, according to the rules above laid down, it will be necessary to have a just idea of, and to keep in view, the different objects of our pursuit, and the different passions and affections of our nature corresponding to them.

We find ourselves placed in a world, in which we are surrounded by a variety of objects, which are capable of giving us pleasure and pain; and finding by our own experience, and the information of others, in what manner each of them is adapted to affect us, we learn to desire some of them, and feel an aversion to others. To these desires

desires and averfions we give the name of *paſſions* or *affections*, and we generally claſs them according to the objects to which they correſpond. Theſe paſſions and affections are the ſprings of all our actions, and by their means we are engaged in a variety of intereſting purſuits through the whole courſe of our lives. When we ſucceed in our purſuits, or are in hopes of ſucceeding, we are happy; and when we are diſappointed in our ſchemes, or in fear of being ſo, we are unhappy.

1. The firſt and loweſt claſs of our deſires is that by which we are prompted to ſeek after corporeal or ſenſual pleaſure, and conſequently to avoid bodily pain. Theſe *appetites*, as they are uſually called, to diſtinguiſh them from *paſſions* of a more refined nature, are common with us and the brutes; and to all appearance they are poſſeſſed of them in as high a degree as we are, and are capable of receiving as much pleaſure from them as we are. Indeed, the *final cauſe*, or the *object* of theſe appetites is the very ſame with reſpect to both, namely, the continuance of life, and the propagation of the ſpecies. It was neceſſary, therefore, that all animals, which have equally their own ſubſiſtence, and the continuance of their ſpecies to provide for, ſhould be equally furniſhed with them.

2. It happens, from a variety of causes, that pleasurable ideas are transferred, by association, upon objects which have not, originally, and in themselves, the power of gratifying any of our senses; as those which give us the ideas that we call *beautiful* or *sublime*, particularly those that occur in works of genius, strokes of wit, and in the polite arts of music, painting, and poetry. Our capacity for enjoying pleasures of this kind, depending upon the association of our ideas, and requiring such advances in intellectual life as brutes are incapable of, they are, therefore, classed under the general denomination of *intellectual pleasures* (a name which we give to all our pleasures, except those of sense) and more particularly under the head of *pleasures of imagination*; because the greater part of them are founded on those resemblances of things, which are perceived and recollected by that modification of our intellectual powers which we call *fancy*.

3. Another class of our passions may be termed the *social*, because they arise from our connections with our fellow creatures of mankind; and these are of two kinds, consisting either in our desire of their good opinion, or in our wishing their happiness or misery. In this latter species of the class, we also comprize gratitude for the favours, and a resentment of the wrongs we receive from them.

Those

Those affections of the mind which respect the divine being belong to this class, the object of them being one with whom we have the most intimate connection, to whom we are under the greatest obligation, and whose approbation is of the greatest importance to us. All the difference there is between our affections, considered as having God or man for their object, arises from the difference of their situation with respect to us. The divine being, standing in no need of our services, is, therefore, no object of our benevolence, properly so called; but the sentiments of reverence, love, and confidence, with respect to God, are of the same nature with those which we exercise towards our fellow creatures, only infinitely exceeding them in *degree*, as the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, infinitely exceed every thing of the same kind in man.

Some of the brutes, living in a kind of imperfect society, and particularly domestic animals, are capable of several of the passions belonging to this class, as gratitude, love, hatred, &c. but having only a small degree of intellect, they are hardly capable of those which have for their object the esteem or good opinion of others; which seem to require a considerable degree of refinement. We see, however, in horses, and some other animals, the strongest emulation, by which they will

exert themselves to the utmost in their endeavours to surpass, and overcome others.

4. A fourth set of passions is that which has for its object our own *interest* in general, and is called *self love*. This seems to require a considerable degree of refinement, and therefore it is probable that brute animals have no idea of it. Their chief object is the gratification of their appetites or passions, without reflecting upon their *happiness in general*, or having any such thing in view in their actions.

There is a lower kind of self interest, or rather *selfishness*, the object of which is the means of procuring those gratifications to which money can be subservient; and from loving money as a *means* of procuring a variety of pleasures and conveniences, a man may at length come to pursue it as an *end*, and without any regard to the proper use of it. It then becomes a new kind of passion, quite distinct from any other; insomuch, that, in order to indulge it, many persons will deprive themselves of every natural gratification.

5. Lastly, as soon as we begin to distinguish among our actions, and are sensible that there are reasons for some of them, and against others, we get a notion of some of them as what *ought* to be performed, and of others of them as what are, or ought to be refrained from. In this manner we get the abstract ideas of *right and wrong* in human actions, and a variety of pleasing circumstances attend-

attending the former, and disagreeable ones accompanying the latter, we come in time to love some kind of actions, and to abhor others, without regard to any other consideration. For the same reason certain tempers, or dispositions of mind, as leading to certain kinds of conduct, become the objects of this moral approbation, or disapprobation; and from the whole, arises what we call a *moral sense*, or a love of virtue and a hatred of vice in the abstract. This is the greatest refinement of which we are capable, and in the due exercise and gratification of it consists the highest perfection and happiness of our natures.

SECTION III.

Of the ruling passion, and an estimate of the propriety and value of the different pursuits of mankind.

HAVING given this general delineation of the various passions and affections of human nature, which may be called the springs of all our actions (since every thing that we do is something that we are prompted to by one or more of them) I shall now proceed to examine them separately, in order to ascertain how far we ought to be influenced by any of them, and in what cases, or degrees, the indulgence of any of them becomes wrong and criminal.

Actuated as we are by a variety of passions, it can hardly be, but that some of them will have more influence over us than others. These are sometimes called *ruling passions*, because, whenever it happens that the gratification of some interferes with that of others, all the rest will give place to these. If, for instance, any man's ruling passion be the love of money, he will deny himself any of the pleasures of life for the sake of it; whereas, if the love of pleasure were his ruling passion, he would often run the risque of impoverishing himself, rather than not procure his favourite indulgence.

It must be of great importance, therefore, to know which ought to be our ruling passions through life, or what are those gratifications and pursuits to which we ought to sacrifice every thing else. This is the object of our present enquiry, in conducting which we must consider how far the indulgence of any particular passion is consistent with our regard to the four rules of conduct that have been explained; namely, the will of God, our own best interest, the good of others, and the natural dictates of our conscience; and in estimating the value of any particular enjoyment, with respect to the happiness we receive from it, we must consider how great or intense it is, how long it will continue, whether we regard the nature of the sense from which it is derived, or the opportunities

opportunities we may have of procuring the gratification of it, and lastly, how far it is consistent, or inconsistent, with other pleasures of our nature, more or less valuable than itself.

§ 1. *Of the pleasures of sense.*

Since no appetite or passion belonging to our frame was given us in vain, we may conclude, that there cannot be any thing wrong in the simple gratification of *any* desire that our maker has implanted in us, under certain limitations and in certain circumstances; and if we consider the proper object of any of our appetites, or the end it is calculated to answer, it will be a rule for us in determining how far the divine being intended that they should be indulged. Now some of our sensual appetites have for their proper object the support of life, and others the propagation of the species. They should, therefore, be indulged as far as is necessary for these purposes, and where the indulgence is not so excessive, or so circumstanced, as to interfere with the greater good of ourselves and others.

1. But to make the gratification of our senses our *primary* pursuit, must be absurd; for the appetite for food is given us for the sake of supporting life, and not life for the sake of consuming food. The like may be said of other sensual appetites.

Since, therefore, we certainly err from the intention of nature when we make that an *end*, which was plainly meant to be no more than a *means* to some farther end; whatever this great end of life be, we may conclude that it cannot be the gratification of our sensual appetites, for they themselves are only a means to something else.

2. To make the gratification of our bodily senses the chief end of living would tend to defeat itself; for a man who should have no other end in view would be apt so to overcharge and surfeit his senses, that they would become indisposed for their proper functions, and indulgence would occasion nothing but a painful loathing. By intemperance also in eating and drinking, and in all other corporeal pleasures, the powers of the body itself are weakened, and a foundation is laid for disorders the most loathsome to behold, the most painful to endure, and the most fatal in their tendencies and issues. The ingenuity of man cannot contrive any torture so exquisite, and at the same time of so long continuance, as those which are occasioned by the irregular indulgence of the senses; whereas temperance, and occasional abstinence, is a means of keeping all the bodily organs and senses in their proper tone, disposed to relish their proper gratifications; so that they shall give a man the most true and exquisite enjoyment even of sensual pleasure. They prolong life to the utmost term of nature,

nature, and contribute to a peaceful and easy death.

3. An addictedness to sensual pleasure blunts the faculties of the mind, being injurious to mental apprehension, and all the finer feelings of the soul, and consequently deprives a man of a great many sources of pleasures which he might otherwise enjoy, and particularly of that most valuable complacency which he might have in his own dispositions and conduct; from a proper and temperate use of the good things of life.

4. Sensual indulgencies, though, to a certain degree, and in certain circumstances, they seem to promote benevolence, are evidently unfriendly to it when carried beyond that degree; for though moderate eating and drinking in company promotes cheerfulness, and good humour, excess frequently gives occasion to quarrelling and contention, and sometimes even to murder. Also, when a man makes the indulgence of his appetites his primary pursuit, besides incapacitating himself for the service of mankind in any important respect, he will scruple no means, however base, cruel, or unjust, to procure himself his favourite pleasures, which he conceives to be in a manner necessary to his being.

5. With respect to the bulk of mankind, whose circumstances in life are low, the sole pursuit of sensual pleasure is exceedingly injurious to that industry

industry which is necessary to their support. Indeed, it is often sufficient to dissipate the most ample fortune, and reduce men from affluence to poverty, which, in such circumstances, they are least able to struggle with.

It is impossible that we should not condemn a disposition and pursuit so circumstanced as this: An addictedness to sensual pleasure is manifestly incompatible with our own true interest, it is injurious to others, and on both these accounts, must be contrary to the will of God. The vices of gluttony, drunkenness, and lewdness, are also, clearly contrary to the natural dictates of our minds; and every man who is guilty of them, feels himself to be despicable and criminal, both in his own eyes, and those of others.

The only rule with respect to our *diet*, is to prefer those kinds, and that quantity of food, which most conduces to the health and vigour of our bodies. Whatever in eating or drinking is inconsistent with, and obstructs this end, is wrong, and should carefully be avoided; and every man's own experience, assisted with a little information from others, will be sufficient to inform him what is nearly the best for himself in both these respects; so that no person is likely to injure himself much through mere mistake.

With respect to those appetites that are subservient to the propagation of the species, I would observe,

observe, that the experience of ages testifies, that *marriage*, at a proper time of life, whereby one man is confined to one woman, is most favourable to health and the true enjoyment of life. It is a means of raising the greatest number of healthy children, and makes the best provision for their instruction and settlement in life; and nothing more need be said to shew that this state of life has every character of what is right, and what ought to be adopted, in preference to every other mode of indulging our natural passions.

Marriage is, moreover, of excellent use as a means of transferring our affections from ourselves to others. We see, not in extraordinary cases, but generally, in common life, that a man even prefers the happiness of his wife and children to his own; and his regard for them is frequently a motive to such industry, and such an exertion of his powers, as would make him exceedingly unhappy, if it were not for the consideration of the benefit that accrues to them from it. Nay, in many cases, we see men risking their lives, and even rushing on certain death, in their defence. The same, also, is generally the attachment of wives to their husbands, and sometimes, but not so generally, the attachment of children to their parents.

We may add, that when once a man's affections have been transferred from himself to others,

even

even his wife and children, they are more easily extended to other persons, still more remote from him, and that, by this means, he is in the way of acquiring a principle of general benevolence, patriotism, and public spirit, which persons who live to be old without ever marrying are not so generally remarkable for. The attention of these persons having been long confined to themselves, they often grow more and more selfish and narrow spirited, so as to be actuated in all their pursuits by a joyless desire of accumulating what they cannot consume themselves, and what they must leave to those who, they know, have but little regard for them, and for whom they have but little regard.

A series of family cares (in which a considerable degree of anxiety and painful sympathy have a good effect) greatly improves, and as it were *mellows*, the mind of man. It is a kind of exercise and discipline, which eminently fits him for great and generous conduct; and, in fact, makes him a superior kind of being, with respect to the generality of those who have had no family connections.

On the other hand, a course of lewd indulgence, without family cares, sinks a man below his natural level. Promiscuous commerce gives an indelible vicious taint to the imagination, so that, to the latest term of life, those ideas will be predominant, which are proper only to youthful vigour.

vigour. And what in nature is more wretched, absurd, and despicable, than to have the mind continually haunted with ideas of pleasures which cannot be enjoyed ; and which ought to have been long abandoned, for entertainments more suited to years ; and from which, if persons had been properly trained, they would, in the course of nature, have been prepared to receive much greater and superior satisfaction.

Besides, all the pleasures of the sexes in the human species, who cannot sink themselves so low as the brutes, depend much upon *opinion*, or particular mental attachment ; and consequently, they are greatly heightened by sentiments of *love* and *affection*, which have no place with common prostitutes, or concubines, where the connection is only occasional or temporary, and consequently slight. Those persons, therefore, who give themselves up to the lawless indulgence of their passions, besides being exposed to the most loathsome and painful disorders, besides exhausting the powers of nature prematurely, and subjecting themselves to severe remorse of mind, have not (whatever they may fancy or pretend) any thing like the real pleasure and satisfaction that persons generally have in the married state.

§ 2. *Of the pleasures of imagination.*

As we ought not to make the gratification of our external senses the main end of life, so neither ought we to indulge our taste for the more refined pleasures, those called the pleasures of imagination, without some bounds. The cultivation of a taste for propriety, beauty, and sublimity, in objects natural or artificial, particularly for the pleasures of music, painting, and poetry, is very proper in younger life; as it serves to draw off the attention from gross animal gratifications, and to bring us a step farther into intellectual life; so as to lay a foundation for higher attainments. But if we stop here, and devote our whole time, and all our faculties to these objects, we shall certainly fall short of the proper end of life.

1. These objects, in general, only give pleasure to a certain degree, and are a source of more pain than pleasure when a person's taste is arrived to a certain pitch of correctness and delicacy: for then hardly any thing will please, but every thing will give disgust that comes not up to such an ideal standard of perfection as few things in this world ever reach: so that, upon the whole, in this life, at least in this country, a person whose taste is no higher than a *mediocrity*, stands the best chance for enjoying the pleasures of imagination; and consequently,

frequently, all the time and application that is more than necessary to acquire this mediocrity of taste, or excellence in the arts respecting it, are wholly lost.

Since, however, the persons and objects with which a man is habitually conversant, are much in his own power, a considerable refinement of taste may not, perhaps, in all cases, impair the happiness of life, but, under the direction of prudence may multiply the pleasures of it, and give a person a more exquisite enjoyment of it.

2. Very great refinement and taste, and great excellence in those arts which are the object of it, are the parents of such excessive *vanity*, as exposes a man to a variety of mortifications, and disappointments in life. They are also very apt to produce envy, jealousy, peevishness, malice, and other dispositions of mind, which are both uneasy to a man's self, and disqualify him for contributing to the pleasure and happiness of others. This is more especially the case where a man's excellence lies chiefly in a single thing, which, from confining his attention to it, will be imagined to be of extraordinary consequence, while every other kind of excellence will be undervalued.

3 With respect to many persons, a great refinement of taste is attended with the same inconveniences as an addictedness to sensual pleasure; for it is apt to lead them into many expences, and
make,

make them despise plain honest industry ; whereby they are frequently brought into a state of poverty, surrounded with a thousand artificial wants, and without the means of gratifying them.

A taste for the pleasures of imagination ought, more particularly, to be indulged, and even encouraged, in younger life, in the interval between a state of mere animal nature, in a child, and the serious pursuits of manhood. It is also a means of relaxing the mind from too close an attention to serious business, through the whole of life, promoting innocent amusement, cheerfulness, and good humour. Besides, a taste for natural, and also for artificial propriety, beauty, and sublimity, has a connection with a taste for moral propriety, moral beauty, and dignity; and when properly cultivated, enables us to take more pleasure in the contemplation of the works, perfections, and providence of God. Here, indeed, it is, that a just taste for these refined pleasures finds its highest and most perfect gratification: for it is in these contemplations, that instances of the most exquisite propriety, beauty, and grandeur occur.

§ 3. *Of self interest.*

A regard to our greatest happiness was allowed before to be one of the proper rules of our conduct;

duct; but at the same time it was shewn to be only one of four; and in fact the proper end of it, or our greatest happiness as individuals, is most effectually gained, when it is not itself the *immediate* scope of our actions; that is, when we have not our interest directly in view, but when we are actuated by a disinterested regard to the good of others, to the commands of God, and to the dictates of conscience.

1. When we keep up a regard to ourselves in our conduct, we can never exclude such a degree of anxiety, and jealousy of others, as will always make us in some degree unhappy; and we find by experience, that no persons have so true and unallayed enjoyments, as those who lose sight of themselves, and of all regard to their own happiness, in higher and greater pursuits.

2. Though it be true, that, when our interest is perfectly understood, it will be found to be best promoted by those actions which are dictated by a regard to the good of others, &c. it requires great comprehension of mind even to see this, and much more to act upon it; so that if the bulk of mankind were taught to pursue their own proper happiness, as the *ultimate end* of life, they would be led to do many things injurious to others, not being able to see how they could otherwise make the best provision for themselves.

3. If

3. If we consult the unperturbed dictates of our minds, we shall feel that there is a kind of *meanness* in a man's acting from a view to his own interest only; and if any person were known to have no higher motive for his conduct, though he should have so much comprehension of mind, as that this principle should never mislead him, and every particular action which he was led to by it should be, in itself, always right, he would not be allowed to have any *moral worth*, so as to command our *esteem*; and he would not at all engage our *love*. All we could say in his favour would be that he was a *prudent* man, not that he was *virtuous*. Nay, we should not allow that any man's conduct was even *right*, in the highest and most proper sense of the word, unless he was influenced by motives of a higher and purer nature; namely, a regard to the will of God, to the good of others, or to the dictates of conscience.

It seems to follow from these considerations, that this principle, of a regard to our highest interest, holds a kind of *middle rank* between the vices and the virtues; and that its principal use is to be a means of raising us above all the lower and vicious pursuits, to those that are higher, and properly speaking virtuous and praise worthy. From a regard to our true interest, or mere self love, we are first of all made sensible that we should injure ourselves by making the gratification
of

of our senses, or the pleasures of imagination, &c. our chief pursuit, and the great business and end of life; and we are convinced that it is our wisdom to pay a supreme regard to the will of our maker, to employ ourselves in doing good to others, and, universally, to obey the dictates of our consciences. This persuasion will lead us to do those things which we know to be agreeable to those higher principles, though we cannot immediately see them to be for our interest; and, by degrees, we shall get a habit of acting in the most pious, generous, and conscientious manner, without ever having our own happiness in view, or in the least attending to any connection, immediate or distant, that our conduct has with it.

On these accounts, it seems better not to consider any kind of self interest as an ultimate rule of our conduct; but that, independent of any regard to our own happiness, we should think ourselves obliged conscientiously to do what is right, and generously and disinterestedly to pursue the good of others, though, to all appearance, we sacrifice our own to it; and at all events to conform to the will of our maker, who, standing in an equal relation to all his offspring, must wish the good of them all, and therefore cannot approve of our consulting our own happiness at the expence of that of others, but must rather take pleasure in seeing us act upon the maxims of his own generous benevo-

benevolence; depending, in general, that that great, righteous, and good being, who approves of our conduct, will not suffer us to be losers by it upon the whole.

There is a lower species of self interest, or *selfishness*, consisting in the *love of money*, which, beyond a certain degree, is highly deserving of censure. As a means of procuring ourselves any kind of gratification, that can be purchased, the love of money is a passion of the same nature with a fondness for that species of pleasure which can be purchased with it. If, for instance, a man makes no other use of his wealth than to procure the means of sensual pleasure, the love of money, in him, is only another name for the love of pleasure. If a man accumulates money with no other view than to indulge his taste in the refined arts above mentioned, his love of money is the same thing with a love of the arts; or lastly, if a man really intends nothing but the good of others, while he is amassing riches, he is actuated by the principle of benevolence.

In short, the love of money, whenever it is pursued, directly and properly, as a *means* to something else, is a passion, the rank of which keeps pace with the *end* that is proposed to be gained by it. But in the pursuit of riches, it is very common to forget the use of money as a means; and to desire it without any farther end, so as even to sacrifice

sacrifice to this pursuit all those appetites and passions, to the gratification of which it was originally subservient, and for the sake of which only it was originally coveted. In this state the love of money, or the passion we call *covetousness*, is evidently absurd and wrong.

This gross self interest, which consists in an excessive love of money, as an end, and without any regard to its use, will sometimes bring a man to abridge himself of all the natural enjoyments of life, and engage him in the most laborious pursuits, attended with most painful anxiety of mind; it very often steels his heart against all the feelings of humanity and compassion, and never fails to fill him with envy, jealousy, and resentment against all those whom he imagines to be his competitors and rivals. Much less does this sordid passion admit of any of the pleasures that result from a consciousness of the approbation of God, of our fellow creatures, or of our own minds. In fact, it deprives a man of all the genuine pleasures of his nature, and involves him in much perplexity and distress; the immediate cause of which, though it be often absurd and imaginary, is serious to himself, and makes him appear in a ridiculous light to others.

All these observations, concerning the love of money, are equally true of the love of *power*, or of any thing else, that is originally desirable as a

means to some farther end, but which afterwards becomes itself an ultimate end of our actions. It is even, in a great measure, true of the love of *knowledge* or *learning*. This is chiefly useful as a means, and is valuable in proportion to the end it is fitted to answer; but, together with the love of riches and power, it is absurd, and to be condemned, when pursued as an end, or for its own sake only.

The amassing of money must be allowed to be reasonable, or at least *excusable*, provided there be a probability that a man may live to enjoy it, or that it may be of use to his posterity, or others in whose welfare he interests himself; but when we see a man persisting in the accumulation of wealth, even to extreme old age, when it would be deemed madness in him to pretend that he could have any real want of it; when he discovers the same avaricious temper, though he has no children, and there is no body for whom he is known to have the least regard, it is evident that he pursues money as an *end*, or for *its own sake*, and not at all as a *means* to any thing farther. In this case, therefore, it is, without doubt, highly criminal, and deserving of the above-mentioned censures.

§ 4. *Of the passions which arise from our social nature.*

The passions and affections which I have hitherto considered are those which belong to us as individuals, and do not necessarily suppose any relation to other beings; I shall now proceed to treat of those which are of this latter class, and first of the pleasure that we take in the good opinion of others concerning us, which gives rise to that passion which we call the *love of fame*.

This is a passion that discovers itself pretty early in life, and arises principally from our experience and observation of the many advantages that result from the good opinion of others. In the early part of life this principle is of signal use to us, as a powerful incentive to those actions which procure us the esteem of our fellow creatures; which are, in general, the same that are dictated by the principles of benevolence and the moral sense, and also by a regard to the will of God.

But though, by this account, the love of fame is an useful *ally* to virtue, the gratification of it ought by no means to be made our primary pursuit; because, if it were known that *fame* was the sole end of a man's actions, he would be so far from gaining this end, that he would be despised by mankind in general; and especially if he were

advanced in life, when it is commonly expected that men should be governed by higher and better principles. For no actions are looked upon by the bulk of mankind as properly praise worthy, but those which proceed from a principle of disinterested benevolence, obedience to God, or a regard to conscience.

2. Besides, *humility* is a principal subject of praise; and, indeed, without this, no other virtue is held in much esteem. Now this humility supposes such a diffidence of one's self, such a readiness to acknowledge the superiority of others, and also so small a degree of complacency in the contemplation of our own excellencies, as must be inconsistent with our making this pleasure our chief pursuit, and the source of our greatest happiness.

3. In another respect, also, the love of fame, as a primary object of pursuit, tends to defeat itself. We are not pleased with praise, except it come from persons of whose *judgment*, as well as *sincerity*, we have a good opinion; but the love of fame, as our supreme good, tends to beget such a degree of *self sufficiency*, and conceit, as makes us despise the rest of mankind; that is, it makes their praise of little value to us; so that the sprightly pleasures of *vanity* naturally give place in time to all the sullenness and moroseness of *pride*.

4. If

4. If a man have no other object than reputation, or popularity, he will be led to dwell frequently upon the subject of his own merit, of which he will, consequently, entertain an overweening and unreasonable opinion; and this can hardly fail to produce, besides a most ridiculous degree of conceit, so much envy and jealousy, as will make him insufferable in society, and subject him to the most cutting mortifications.

5. If a man's principal object be those qualifications and actions which usually distinguish men, and make them much talked of, both in their own and future ages, such as eminence with respect to genius, excellence in the polite arts, discoveries in science, or great achievements in the arts of peace or war, his chance of succeeding is very small; for it is not possible that more than a *few* persons, in comparison, can draw the attention of the rest of mankind upon them. And besides that the qualifications which are the foundation of this eminence are very rare among mankind, success depends upon the concurrence of many *circumstances*, independent on a man's self. It is plain, therefore, that very few persons can reasonably hope to distinguish themselves in this manner, and it would certainly be very wrong to propose that as a principal object of pursuit to all mankind, which the bulk of them cannot possibly obtain, or enjoy.

The proper use of this love of fame, as of the principle of self interest, is to be a means of bringing us within the influence of better and truly virtuous principles, in consequence of be-
getting a habit of doing the same things which better principles would prompt to. If, for instance, a man should, first of all, perform acts of charity and beneficence from ostentation only, the joy that he actually communicates to others, and the praises he receives for his generosity, from those who are strangers to his real motive, cannot but give him an idea of the purer pleasures of genuine benevolence, from which, and not from a desire of applause only, he will for the future act.

The pleasures that accrue to us from the pursuit of fame, like those of self interest, are best gained by persons who have them not directly in view. The man who is truly benevolent, pious, and conscientious, will, in general, secure the most solid and permanent reputation with mankind; and if he be so situated as that the practice of any real virtue shall be deemed unfashionable, and subject him to contempt and insult, he will have acquired that *superiority of mind*, which will set him above it; so that he will not feel any pain from the want of such esteem, as must have been purchased by the violation, or neglect of his duty. But he will rather applaud himself, and rejoice that he is not esteemed by persons of certain characters,

ractions, be they ever so numerous, and distinguished on certain accounts; finding more than an equivalent recompence in the approbation of his own mind, in the esteem of the wise and good, though they be ever so few, and especially in the favour of God, who is the searcher of hearts, the best judge, and most munificent rewarder of real worth.

§ 5. *Of the sympathetic affections.*

A passion for fame, though it be founded on the relation that men stand in to one another, and therefore supposes society, is of a very different nature from the *social principle*, properly so called; or a disposition to love, and to do kind offices to our fellow creatures.

1. That it is with the greatest justice that this is ranked among our highest pursuits has been shewn already. That the study to do good to others, is placed in this rank, must be perfectly agreeable to the will of God, who cannot but intend the happiness of all his offspring, and who is himself actuated by the principle of universal benevolence. If we consult the natural dictates of our conscience, we shall find that it gives the strongest approbation to disinterested benevolence in ourselves or others; and if we examine how our own highest interest is affected by it, we shall find

that, in general, the more exalted is our benevolence, and the more we lay ourselves out to promote the good of others, the more perfect enjoyment we have of ourselves, and the more we are in the way of receiving good offices from others in return; and, upon the whole, the happier we are likely to be.

2. A man of a truly benevolent disposition, and who makes the good of others the object of his pursuit, will never want opportunities of employing and gratifying himself: for we are so connected with, and dependent upon one another, the small upon the great, and the great upon the small, that, whatever be a man's station in life, if he be of a benevolent disposition, it will always be in his power to oblige others, and thereby indulge himself,

3. A person so benevolent may, in general, depend upon success in his schemes, because mankind are previously disposed to approve, recommend, and countenance benevolent undertakings; and though such a person will see much misery and distress, which he cannot relieve, and which will, consequently, give him some pain; yet, upon the whole, his pleasures will be far superior to it; and the pains of sympathy do not, in general, agitate the mind beyond the limits of pleasure. We have even a kind of satisfaction with ourselves in contemplating scenes of distress, though

though we can only *wish* to relieve the unhappy sufferers. For this reason it is that tragic scenes, and tragical stories are so engaging. This kind of satisfaction has even more charms for mankind in general, than the view of many pleasing scenes of life.

4. Besides, if to the principle of benevolence be added a strict regard to conscience, and confidence in divine providence, all the pains of sympathy will almost wholly vanish. If we are conscious that we do all we can to assist and relieve others, we may have perfect satisfaction in ourselves, and may habitually rejoice in the belief of the wisdom and goodness of God; being convinced that all the evils, which we ineffectually strive to remove; are appointed for wise and good purposes; and that, being of a temporary nature, they will finally be absorbed in that infinity of happiness, to which, though in ways unknown to us, we believe them to be subservient.

Every argument by which benevolence is recommended to us condemns *malevolence*; or a disposition to rejoice in the misery, and to grieve at the happiness of others. This baleful disposition may be generated by frequently considering our own interest as in opposition to that of others. For, in this case, at the same time that we receive pleasure from our own gain, we receive pleasure also from their loss, which is connected with it; and for the

same reason, when we grieve for our own loss, we grieve at their gain. In this manner emulation envy, jealousy, and at length actual hatred, and malice, are produced in our hearts.

It is for this reason that *gaming* is unfavourable to benevolence, as well as other virtues, and high gaming exceedingly pernicious. For, in this case, every man's gain is directly produced by another's loss; so that the gratification of the one and the disappointment of the other must always go together. Indeed, upon the same just principle, all trade and commerce, all buying and selling is wrong, unless it be to the advantage of both parties.

Malevolent dispositions, besides that they are clearly contrary to the will of God, and the dictates of conscience, are the source of much pain and misery to ourselves. They consist of very uneasy feelings; so that no man can be happy, or enjoy any satisfaction, while he is under the influence of them. Even the pleasures of revenge are shocking to think of, and what a man must despise himself for being capable of relishing and enjoying; and they are, in all cases, infinitely inferior to the noble satisfaction which a man feels in forgiving an injury. There is a meanness in the former, but true greatness of mind, and real dignity in the latter, and the pleasure which it gives does not pall upon reflection. Besides, a disposition to
do

do ill offices to others exposes a man to the hatred and ill-offices of others. The malevolent man arms all mankind against him.

Anger is, indeed, in some cases, reasonable; as when it is directed against the vicious, and injurious, who are the pests of society; so that being enemies to such persons is being friends to mankind at large. But here great caution should be used, lest this passion of anger should, as it is very capable of doing, degenerate into pure *ill will* towards those who are the objects of it. Nay, we should never indulge to anger so far as to cease to have the real good and welfare of the offender at heart, but be ready even to do our greatest personal enemies any kind office in our power, provided that the consequence of it would not be injurious to society. This, indeed, is what the law of universal benevolence plainly requires, as it strictly forbids the doing any *unnecessary* evil; and that evil is unnecessary, which the good and happiness of others does not require. If, therefore, we would appear to act upon this principle, we must be careful so to conduct our resentment, as that it may be manifest that it is with reluctance that we entertain sentiments of enmity.

If it be our duty to bear good will even to our enemies, much more should we exercise it to our real friends, and use our endeavours to make the most ample return for any kindness that they do to

us. Indeed there is no virtue which has a stronger testimony in the consciences of all men, than *gratitude*, and no vice is universally so hateful as ingratitude.

If the good of society be our object, there can be no question, but that *veracity*, with respect to all our declarations, and *fidelity*, with respect to all our engagements, is one of the most important of all social duties. All the purposes of society would be defeated, if falsehood were as common as truth among mankind; and in those circumstances all beneficial intercourse would soon cease among them; and notwithstanding temporary inconveniencies may sometimes arise from a rigid adherence to truth, they are infinitely overbalanced by the many superior advantages that arise from our depending upon the regard to it being inviolable.

Since an *oath*, or an appeal to the divine being, is the most deliberate, and the most solemn of all the modes of asseveration, it ought to be the most scrupulously observed. There is not, in the nature of things, any stronger guard against imposition and deceit; and therefore a person who has once *perjured* himself, deserves not only to be detested, and shunned, as the bane of society, but to be expelled out of it.

§ 5. *Of the relative duties.*

As we stand in a variety of relations to one another, and have much more opportunity of doing kind offices to some than to others, we cannot suppose that the divine being intended that our benevolence should be like his own, *universal* and *impartial*. He stands in the same relation to all his creatures, and he is capable of attending to the wants of them all; whereas our beneficence is necessarily limited, and therefore should flow the most freely towards those whom we can most conveniently and effectually serve. Besides the good of the whole will be best provided for by every person making this a rule to himself; whereas, if every person, without any particular regard to his own limited province, should extend his care to the wants of mankind in general, very little good would, in fact, be done by any.

The *domestic relations* of life are the foundation of the strongest claim upon our benevolence and kindness. The interests of *husband and wife* are the same, and inseparable, and they must necessarily pass a very great part of their time together. In these circumstances, to be mutually happy, their affection must be strong and undivided. The welfare of their offspring, likewise, requires this, that they may give their united care and attention to form their bodies and minds, in order to fit them

for

for the business of life, and to introduce them with advantage into the world.

As nature makes children the charge of their parents in younger life, so it lays an equal obligation on children to provide for their parents, when they are old and infirm, and unable to provide for themselves.

Masters and servants are under a variety of mutual obligations; and if that connection be happy; and mutually advantageous, there must be justice, humanity, and liberality on the one hand, requited with fidelity, reasonable submission, and affection on the other.

Our own country, likewise, claims a particular preference. We ought to give more attention to its welfare than to that of any other country, and its magistrates are intitled to our particular reverence and respect.

It is for the good of the whole that we proportion our regards and benevolent attention in this manner; that is, regulating them, according to those connections in life that are of the most importance to our own happiness; but still, we should never lose sight of the relation we stand in to all mankind, and to all the creation of God; with respect to whom we are brethren, and fellow subjects; and whenever the interest of ourselves, our own families, or country does not greatly interfere, we should lay ourselves out to do good

to

to strangers and foreigners, or to any persons that may stand in need of our assistance; doing to others as we would they should do to us; which is a rule of the gospel that is perfectly agreeable to natural reason.

§ 6. *Of the Theopathic affections.*

As benevolence, or the love of mankind, so also the love of God, and devotedness to him bears every character of one of our highest and most proper principles of conduct.

1. This principle interferes with no real gratification, but in such a manner that all the restraint it lays upon any of them is, in reality, favourable to the true and perfect enjoyment we derive from them. No pains that we can expose ourselves to for the sake of mortifying ourselves, can be pleasing to that being who made us to be happy, and who has, for that purpose, given us the power, and the means, of a variety of gratifications, suited to our state and condition. In this general manner it is shewn that the love of God, and devotedness to him, is perfectly agreeable to a regard to our own greatest good. This principle must be consistent with our attention to the good of others, because God is the father of us all, and we are equally his offspring; and nature teaches us to consider him as our father, moral governor, and judge, and
therefore

therefore to reverence, love, and obey him without reserve.

2. An entire devotedness to God, faith in his providence, and resignation to his will, is the best antidote against all the evils of life. If we firmly believe that nothing comes to pass, respecting ourselves, our friends, and our dearest interests, but by his appointment or permission; and that he appoints or permits nothing but for the best purposes, we shall not only *acquiesce*, but *rejoice* in all the events of life, prosperous or adverse. We shall consider every thing as a means to a great, glorious, and joyful end; the consideration of which will reflect a lustre upon every thing that leads to it, that has any connection with it, or the most distant reference to it.

3. Other affections may not always find their proper gratifications, and therefore may be the occasion of *pain* as well as of *pleasure* to us. Even the most benevolent purposes are frequently disappointed, and without faith in the providence of God, who has the good of all his offspring at heart, would be a source of much sorrow and disquiet to us. But the man whose supreme delight arises from the sense of his relation to his maker, from contemplating his perfections, his works, and his providence; and who has no will but his, must be possessed of a never failing source of joy and satisfaction. Every object that occurs to a person of this

this disposition will be viewed in the most favourable light; and whether it be immediately, pleasurable or painful, the relation it bears to God, and his moral government, will make it welcome to him.

4. If we consider the foundation of the duty and affection we owe to God upon the natural principles of right and equity, in the same manner as, from the same natural dictates, we judge of the duty we owe to mankind, we cannot but readily conclude, that, if a *human* father, benefactor, governor, and judge, is intitled to our love, reverence, and obedience; he who is in a much higher and a more perfect sense, our father, benefactor, governor, and judge, must be intitled to a greater portion of our love, reverence, and obedience; because, in all these relations, he has done, and is continually doing more to deserve them. Considering what we have received, and what we daily receive from God, even life and all the powers and enjoyments of it; considering our present privileges, and our future hopes, it is impossible that our attention, attachment, submission, and confidence, should exceed what is reasonable and properly due to him.

In the regulation of our devotion, we should carefully avoid both *enthusiasm* and *superstition*, as they both arise from unworthy notions of God, and his moral government. The former consists

in

in a childish fondness, familiarity, and warmth of passion, and an aptness on that account, to imagine that we are the peculiar favourites of the divine being, who is the father, friend, and moral governor of all his creatures. Besides this violent affection cannot, in its own nature, be of long continuance. It will, of course, abate of its fervour; and those who have given way to it will be apt to think of God with the other extreme of coldness and indifference; the consequence of which is often extreme dejection, fear, anxiety, and distrust; and sometimes it ends in despair, and impiety.

On the other hand, *superstition* arises from mistaking the proper object of the divine favour and approbation, for want of having a just idea of the moral perfections of God, and of the importance of real virtue. Persons of this character are extremely punctual with respect to the *means* and *circumstantials* of religion, or things that have only an imaginary relation to it, and may be quite foreign to its real nature; instead of bringing to God the devotion of the heart, and the proper fruits of it, in the faithful discharge of the duties of life, in the personal and social capacities. The omission of some mere form, or ceremony, shall give such persons more real uneasiness than the neglect of a moral duty; and when they have complied with all the forms which they think requisite to be observed,

served, their consciences are entirely easy, their former guilt has no pressure, and they are ready to contract new debts to be wiped off in the same manner. Almost all the religion of the Mahometans and Papists consists in this kind of superstition, and there is too much of it in all sects and denominations of christians. I cannot give a clearer idea of the nature of superstition than by what appeared in the conduct of some Roman Catholics in Ireland, who, I have been told, broke into a house, where they were guilty of robbery and murder, but, sitting down to regale themselves, would not taste flesh meat, because it was Friday.

There is no quality of the heart so valuable as a just and manly piety, and nothing so abject as superstition. Superstition and enthusiasm are generally demoninated the two *extremes* of religion, and in some senses they are so; but, at the same time, they have a near connection with one another, and nothing is more common than for persons to pass from the one to the other, or to live under the alternate, or even the constant influence of them both, without entertaining one sentiment of generous and useful devotion. Indeed the usual ground of the presumption and rapture of the enthusiast is *some* external observance, or internal feeling, that can have no claim to the solid approbation of a reasonable being.

§ 7. *Of the obligation of conscience.*

In order to govern our conduct by a regard to our own true interest, to the good of mankind, or the will of God, it is necessary that we use our reason, that we *think* and *reflect* before we act. Another principle, therefore, was necessary, to dictate to us on sudden *emergencies*, and to prompt us to right action *without reasoning* or thinking at all. This principle we call *conscience*, and being the natural substitute of all the three other rules of right conduct, it must have the same title to our regard. As this principle, however, is a thing of a variable nature, it must be corrected from time to time, by recurring to the principles out of which it was formed. Otherwise, as we see exemplified in fact, conscience may come to dictate things most injurious to our own good, or that of others, and even most dishonourable to God. What impurities, what ridiculous penances and mortifications, yea, what villanies and cruelties do we not find to have been acted by mankind, under the notion of rendering themselves acceptable to the object of their supreme worship.

If, however, a person has been well educated in a christian and protestant country, and has lived some time under the influence of good impressions, such as are favourable to virtue and happiness, the
dictates

dictates of his conscience (which has been formed from those good principles) will generally be right, and may be depended upon not to mislead him. At all events, it is very dangerous to slight and disregard the real dictates of our own minds, so as either to do what we have a feeling of as wrong, and what we condemn ourselves for at the time, or to forbear to do what appears to us to be right, what we think we ought to do, and what we feel a sudden impulse to do. For if we can disregard even an *erroneous conscience*, we may come to disregard the authority of *conscience in general*, and as *such*, which after all, is the surest and best guardian of our virtue.

2. If the principle of conscience has been well formed, in consequence of a just train of sentiments, and proper impressions, since it is the result of rational self interest, benevolence, and piety, jointly, it may be considered as the very quintessence and perfection of our rational natures; so that to do a thing because it is *right*, will be to act from a nobler, and more exalted principle of conduct than any of the others. For it is, in fact, every just principle united, and reduced into one; and, on this account, it will naturally claim the pre-eminence over the dictates of any of them singly, supposing them to clash; and many cases may be put, in which it ought to correct and overrule any of them.

The

The regard I have to my own interest, believing it to be my highest, the love I bear to my fellow creatures, or even what I take to be the command of God, may dictate one thing, when my sense of right and wrong, whether natural or acquired, may dictate another; and it may be safest and best for me to follow this guide. Thus a Papist may really believe that he does good to the souls, by tormenting the bodies of his fellow creatures, and thereby does God service, and that it is no sin to deceive hereticks; but if he feel an inward reluctance in pursuing persecuting measures, and cannot tell a deliberate falsehood without compunction, we should not hesitate to pronounce that he would do well to forbear that conduct, notwithstanding his belief that he is thereby consulting the good of mankind, and the glory of God; at least till he hath carefully compared the dictates of his conscience with what he imagined to be the command of God.

3. The satisfaction that results from obeying the dictates of conscience is of a solid and permanent kind, and affords consolation under all the pains and troubles of life. Whatever befall a man, if he can say that he hath done his *duty*, and can believe himself, he will not be wholly unhappy. On the other hand, the pangs of a guilty conscience are the most intolerable of all evils. One villanous action is sufficient to imbitter a man's whole life, and

and years of remorse will not make the reflection upon it less cutting and disquieting. All the riches, honours, and luxury of life are not sufficient to give ease to the mind of that man, who thoroughly condemns and abhors himself.

4. This mechanical and necessary determination in favour of some actions, and against others, being either connate with the mind, or, which comes to the same thing, arising necessarily from our constitution, as influenced by the circumstances of our being, must have been intended for some very important purpose; and this, in its own nature, can be no other than to be the monitor and guide of life. It is, in a manner, felt to be the representative of God himself, and therefore, its sentence will be considered as the forerunner of the righteous sentence which our maker and sovereign judge will pass upon us. It is not only present pain that disquiets the guilty mind, but a dread of future and divine judgments; as, on the other hand, the approbation of our own hearts is the most pleasing feeling a man can have, not on its own account, so much as its being a kind of certificate of the divine approbation, and a foretaste of his future favour and reward.

SECTION IV.

Of the means of virtue.

HAVING thus shown the rank and value of all our passions and affections, or the regard that is due to each in the conduct of our lives; I shall give some practical directions, how to suppress what is irregular and vicious, and promote what is right and virtuous in us.

1. If any of our inferior passions have gained the ascendancy in us, so that a propensity to any species of indulgence is become excessive, and, in consequence of it, bad habits have been formed, it is certainly a man's wisdom, as soon as he begins to suspect that he is in a wrong course, to weigh in his own mind such considerations as have been mentioned above, respecting the nature and tendency of our passions; that he may thoroughly convince himself how foolish a part he has chosen for himself, how injurious his conduct is to others, how displeasing to his maker, and how much it is the cause of shame and remorse to himself.

It is generally through want of timely *reflection*, that men abandon themselves to irregular indulgences, and contract bad habits; so that if they would give themselves time to *think*, and consider
deli-

deliberately of the nature and consequences of their conduct, they would chuse a wise and virtuous course. For no man is so infatuated as, that, when no particular temptation is present, when he is perfectly master of himself, and cannot but see what is for his true interest, purposely and knowingly to lay aside all regard to it. All mankind wish to be happy, and no man can voluntarily chuse to be miserable. Were any man, therefore, truly sensible, that there is no kind of vice to which he does not sacrifice either the health of his body, his reputation with the thinking part of mankind, or even his worldly interest, sometimes all these together, and always the peace and tranquillity of his mind, who would chuse to persist in it; admitting that a regard to the good of others, and to the known will of God should have no weight among them; though there are few persons, I believe, who are not more or less influenced even by these generous and disinterested considerations.

2. Particular care should be taken on our entrance into the world, that we contract no bad habits; for such is the nature of habits, that when once a man has been accustomed to any thing, it may give him the greatest pain to break himself of it, even though he have no pleasure, yea, though he be really unhappy in continuing in it. Youth is, on every account, that time of life which re-

quires our greatest attention, for then only is the mind susceptible of new impressions, so as to be capable of changing for the better.

When once a man's connections and mode of life have been settled, which is generally before, or soon after he is arrived at thirty years of age, the bent of his mind is completely formed, and it is a thousand to one but that after this there will be no material change in his disposition or conduct to the end of his life. If his mind be vitiated then, there is little hope of a change, without a total revolution in his connections and affairs; or unless his mind be roused by some uncommon calamity. In this case, entering, as it were, upon life again, with wisdom bought by experience, his old connections being broken, and new ones to be formed, he may chuse a wiser course, and in time may make it familiar and pleasing to him. But still there is a great danger of his relapsing into his former habits, the first opportunity.

A new set of *principles*, new *views* and *expectations* may be equivalent to such an intire revolution in a man's affairs as was mentioned above. For many persons are so disposed, that if they had more *knowledge*, they would have more *virtue*. Thus the doctrines of a resurrection, and of a future state of retribution, produced a very great and speedy change in the moral state of the heathen world, at the first promulgation of christianity,
affecting

affecting the old as well as the young. But when nothing *new* takes place, with respect either to a man's circumstances, or his knowledge, there is but little probability that his conduct will be materially affected by an attention to *truths* and *facts*, to the contemplation of which he has been long accustomed.

3. If bad habits have, unhappily, been formed, and a man thinks he has strength of mind to break through them, he has no other way but resolutely to avoid every associated circumstance belonging to them, whatever can so much as lead him to *think* of his former vicious pleasures; particularly the *company* he has formerly kept, and by whose example, insinuations, and solicitations, he has been seduced. A man who confides in his fortitude, and wilfully runs into temptation, is almost sure to be overcome. Our only safety, in these cases, consists in flying from the danger, through a wise distrust of ourselves.

4. We must, also, resolutely do whatever we are convinced is right, whether we can immediately take pleasure in it or not. Let a man invariably do his duty, and he will, in time, find a real satisfaction in it, which will increase, as right conduct grows more habitual; till, in time, notwithstanding the reluctance with which he entered upon a virtuous course, he will have the most sincere pleasure in it, on its own account. He will

love virtue for its own sake, and will not change his course of life even though it should not be the most advantageous to him for the present. If the most selfish person in the world would make a point of doing generous things, and thus get a custom of befriending and relieving others, till he should look upon it as his indispensable *business*, and his proper *employment*, he would, at length, find satisfaction, in it, and would act habitually from the pure principles of benevolence.

5. The contemplation of virtuous characters is a great means of inspiring the mind with a love of virtue. If a man attentively considers the history of a virtuous person, he cannot help entering into, and approving his sentiments, and he will interest himself in his fate. In short, he will feel himself disposed to act the same part in the same circumstances. It is not equally adviseable to study the lives, and contemplate the characters of *vicious* persons, with a view to be deterred from the practice of vice, by means of the horror with which it would inspire us. Because, when the mind is familiarized to any thing, the horror with which we first viewed it, in a great measure, ceases; and let a man have been ever so wicked, and his schemes ever so detestable, it is hardly possible (if his character and history have been for a long time the principal object of our attention) not to interest ourselves in his affairs, so as to be pleased with the
success

success of his schemes and stratagems. There will be the more danger of this effect, if such a person have any good qualifications to recommend him; and no man is so far abandoned to vice, as to be entirely destitute of all amiable and engaging qualities.

Vice joined with wit and humour, or any talent, by which a man gives pleasure, or excites admiration, is exceedingly dangerous; more especially if a person of a profligate character be possessed of any real virtues, particularly such as strike the mind with an idea of *dignity* and *generosity*. Thus courage, and humanity too often cover and recommend the most scandalous vices, and even such as really tend to make men cowardly, treacherous, and cruel; and which, at length, extinguish every spark of generosity and goodness in the heart.

6. In order to cultivate the virtues of piety or devotion to the most advantage, it seems necessary that we frequently meditate upon the works, the attributes, and the character of the divine being, and on the benefits which we daily receive from his hands; that we, more especially, reflect upon his universal presence, and providence; till every object, and every occurrence shall introduce the idea of God, as our creator, preserver, benefactor, moral governor, and judge. In this case a regard to him cannot fail habitually to influence our dis-

positions and conduct, so as to prove the strongest preservative against all vice and wickedness.

7. *Prayer* must be joined to meditation. We must frequently address ourselves to God, expressing our veneration for his character, our gratitude for his favours to us, our humiliation for our offences, our devotedness to his will, our resignation to his providence, and also our *desire* of any thing that he knows to be really good for us. This kind of intercourse with the deity tends greatly to strengthen every proper disposition of mind towards him. Prayer is the universal dictate of nature, not sophisticated by the refinements of philosophy; and, in fact, has been the practice of all mankind.

Besides, though God be so great and good, though he knows all our wants, and is at all times disposed to grant us every proper blessing; yet he who made us, so as that we cannot help having recourse to him as our father, benefactor, and protector, in the same manner as we have recourse to our superiors and benefactors on earth, will no doubt approve, encourage, and condescend to that manner of behaviour and address to him, which the same dispositions and circumstances necessarily prompt us to with respect to one another. We may assure ourselves, therefore, that the divine being will *realise* our natural conceptions of him, and reward his humble worshippers. Since we cannot rise to him, and conceive of him in a manner that

is

is strictly agreeable to his nature, and since our intercourse with him is necessary to our virtue and happiness, he will certainly condescend to us; so that we may depend upon finding him to be what the best of his creatures hope, and expect concerning him.

It will not therefore be the same thing, whether we apply to him for the good things we stand in need of, or not. Do not the wisest and best of parents act in the same manner towards their children? It has been the source of great error, and rash judgement concerning the ways of God, to confine ourselves to the consideration of what God is *in himself*, and not to consider what it even becomes his wisdom and goodness, both to represent himself, and actually to be, with *respect to his imperfect creatures*.

Besides, if *good dispositions* be regarded as the only object and end of prayer, it should be considered, that an address to God for what we want is a *test* of good dispositions, as well as a *means of improving* them, supposing it be known to be the will of God, that we should pray to him. But it must be acknowledged that, without revelation, or some express intimation of the will of God, in this respect, the reasonableness and obligation of prayer is not so clearly, though sufficiently evident.

In fact, there are similar reasons for *asking* favours of God, as for *thanking* him for the favours we

have received ; since it may be said, that if we be truly grateful, it is quite unnecessary to tell the divine being that we are so ; and thus all intercourse with God by words must be cut off. But, certainly there can be no real impropriety in expressing by words whatever is the *language of the heart* ; and it can only be an unreasonable and dangerous refinement to distinguish, in this case, between love, gratitude, desire, or any other disposition of mind.

P A R T III.

Of the future expectations of mankind.

HAVING endeavoured to investigate the rules of human duty, from the principles of natural reason, I shall proceed to ascertain, from the same principles, what we have to expect in consequence of our observance, or neglect of them.

The natural rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, in this life, have been already mentioned occasionally. I, therefore, propose, in this section, to consider the evidence with which nature furnishes us, concerning a *future life*, impartially stating both its strength and its weakness.

1. The argument that, in general, has the most weight with the wise and good, in favour of a future life, is the promiscuous and unequal distribution of good and evil in this world, in a *general*, indeed, but by no means an *exact* proportion to the degrees of moral worth; which seems to be inconsistent with the perfect goodness and rectitude of God as our mortal governor. If, together with his attributes of infinite wisdom and power, he be also a lover of virtue, may it not be expected, it is said, that he will reward it more completely than is

generally done in this world, especially in the case of a man sacrificing his life to his integrity, when he evidently cuts himself off from all prospect of any reward, except in a future state. It is acknowledged that in this life we find all the perfection we could wish, considering it as a state of trial and discipline in which to *form virtuous characters*; but in order to complete this scheme, it seems to require another state, to which it may be subservient, and in which the characters that are formed here, may have a suitable employment and reward.

2. There is in the human faculties a capacity for *endless improvement*, in a constant advance from sensual to intellectual pleasures, and these growing more complex and refined *ad infinitum*, provided it was not checked by that change in our constitution which is at present produced by our approach to old age. Our *comprehension of mind*, likewise, increases with the experience of every day; whereby we are capable of enjoying more of the past and of the future together with the present, without limits, and whereby our happiness is capable of growing continually more stable and more exalted. In comparison of what we are evidently capable of, our present being is but the infancy of man. Here we acquire no more than the rudiments of knowledge and happiness. And can it be consistent with the wisdom of God, to leave his workmanship so unfinished,

finished, as it must be, if a final stop be put to all our improvements at death?

It is true, that we have no faculties but what have some proper exercise in this life, and there is a kind of *redundancy* in all the powers of nature. It is the best provision against a deficiency. Brute creatures too have faculties similar to ours, since they differ from us in *degree* more than in *kind*. But then the difference is so great, especially with respect to some men and some brutes, and man is so evidently the most distinguished of all the creatures of God upon the face of the earth, that there seems to be foundation enough for our expecting a preference in this respect. Or, if the brute creation should be interested in a future life, we shall certainly have more reason to rejoice in it, than to be offended at it; and many of them seem to have more pain than pleasure in this.

We see, indeed, that many things never actually arrive at what we call their *perfect state*. For example, few seeds ever become plants, and few plants live to bear fruit; but still *some* of each species come to maturity, and are whatever their nature is capable of being. Allowing, therefore, that, agreeably to this analogy, very few of mankind should arrive at the proper perfection of their natures, we might imagine that, at least, *some* would; and therefore that the wise and the virtuous, if none else, might

hope to survive that wreck which would overwhelm the common mass of their species.

It must be acknowledged that, considering only what we know of the constitution of the body and the mind of man, we see no reason to expect that we shall survive death. The faculties and operations of the mind evidently depend upon the state of the body, and particularly that of the brain. To all appearance, they grow, decay, and perish together. But if the goodness, the wisdom, and the rectitude of the divine being require it, he can easily revive both, or continue the same *consciousness* (which is, in fact, *ourselves*) in some other way.

If we had known nothing of a child but its condition in the womb, we should have pronounced, that its sudden transition into a state so different from it as that which it comes into after birth, would be certain death to it, though, now that we are acquainted with both the states, and can compare them together, we see that the one is preparatory to the other. Equally unfit are we, in this life, to pronounce concerning the real nature of what we call *death*; and when we actually come to live again, we may see an evident, and even a natural connection betwixt this life and the future, and may then understand the use of death, as a passage from the one to the other; just as we now see the necessity of the birth of a child, in order to its transition to our present mode of existence.

Admitting

Admitting that death is an entire cessation of thought, similar to a state of *perfectly* sound sleep, or a stupor, yet, if the purposes of God's providence and moral government require it, he can make us to awake from this sleep at any distance of time; and then the interval, let it have been ever so long, will appear as nothing to us.

I cannot say that I lay much stress upon the arguments which some have drawn either from the *desire*, or the *belief* of a future life among mankind; because the former is nothing, in fact, but a desire of happiness, and similar to other desires, which, in a thousand respects, we do not see to be gratified; and other general opinions may perhaps be mentioned, which, nevertheless, are not true.

The general belief and expectation of a future life, is a consideration of importance, but only as a proof of an *early tradition*, which was probably derived from some revelation on that subject, communicated by God to the first parents of mankind.

Upon the whole, I cannot help thinking, that there is something in the arguments above recited, which shews that a future life is very agreeable to the appearances of this, though I do not think them so striking, as to have been sufficient, of themselves, to have suggested the first idea of it. And though, if we had never heard of a future life, we might not have expected it; yet now that we have heard
of

of it, we may be sensible that we should do violence to nature, if we should cease to hope for, and believe it.

Admitting that there is another life, taking place either at death, or at some future period, it must be acknowledged, that our condition in it is, at present, in a great measure unknown to us; but since the principal arguments in favour of it are drawn from the consideration of the moral government of God, we may depend upon it, that virtue will find an adequate reward in it, and vice its proper punishment. But of what *kind*, it is impossible for us to say.

We seem, however, to have sufficient reason to conclude that, since both the happiness and misery of a future life will be proportioned to the degrees of virtue and vice in this, they must both be *finite*; that is, there must be a continuance of virtue, to secure a continuance of reward, and a continuance in vice to deserve a continuance of punishment.

Although the goodness of God should give a pre-eminence to *virtue* and the rewards of it, in a future state, yet we do not see that even his *justice*, in any sense of the word, can require him to do the same with respect to vice. Indeed, we must give up all our ideas of *proportion between crimes and punishment*, that is, all our ideas of *justice* and *equity*, if we say that a punishment strictly speaking
infinite,

infinite, either in duration or degree, can be incurred by the sin of a *finite creature*, in a *finite time*, especially considering the frailty of human nature, the multiplicity of temptations with which some poor unhappy wretches are beset, and the great disadvantages they labour under through life.

There is, indeed, a sense, and a very alarming one too, in which future punishments, though not strictly speaking infinite, may, nevertheless, be *without end*, and yet be consistent with the perfect rectitude and goodness of God. For the wicked, though confined to a situation which, after some time at least, may not be absolutely, and in itself, painful, may be for ever excluded from a happier situation, to which they see the virtuous advanced. And having this continually in prospect, and knowing that there is an utter impossibility of their ever regaining the rank they have lost by their vices, they may never cease to blame and reproach themselves for their folly, which cannot be recalled, and the effects of which are irreversible.

If we argue from the analogy of nature, we shall rather conceive, that, since pain, and evils of every kind, are salutary in this life, they will have the same tendency and operation in a future; and, consequently, that they will be employed to correct, meliorate, and reform those who are exposed to them; so that, after a sufficient time of purification,

cation, those who are not made virtuous by the sufferings and discipline of this life, will be recovered to virtue and happiness by the long continuance of unspeakably greater sufferings, and of a much *severer discipline* in the life to come.

Since, however, the longer we live in this life, the more *fixed* are our habits, and dispositions of mind, so that there is an astonishing difference between the *flexibility*, as we may call it, of a child, and that of a grown man, our constitution after death may be such, as that any change in the temper of our minds will be brought about with much more difficulty, so that a space of time almost incredible to us at present, may be necessary, in order that the sufferings of a future life may have their proper effect, in reforming a person who dies a slave to vicious habits.

The motives to virtue by no means lose any of their real force from the consideration of the *non-
eternity* of *future punishments*, especially upon the supposition that they will be very intense, and lasting, though not absolutely *without end*. For, in the first place, what is lost with respect to the motive of *terror* and astonishment, is gained by that of *love*, and the persuasion of the greater regard, in the divine being, both to justice and mercy, in *not retaining anger for ever*, on account of the finite offences of his imperfect creatures.

Secondly,

Secondly, if the mind of any man be so hardened, as that he will not be influenced by the expectation of a very long continuance of punishment, a thousand years for instance, he will not, in fact, be influenced by the expectation of any suffering at all, even that of eternal and infinite suffering. For, in reality, if the fear of the former do not affect him, and stop his career of vice, it must be owing to his not allowing himself time to think and reflect upon the subject. For no man who really *thinks* and *believes*, can be guilty of such extreme folly, as to purchase a momentary gratification at so disproportioned a price; and if a man do *not think* about the matter, but will follow his appetites and passions without any reflection, all difference, in the intensity or duration of punishment, is wholly lost upon him.

In fact, we see that the bulk of professing christians, who, if they were asked, would acknowledge their belief of the eternity of hell torments, are by no means effectually deterred from vice by their belief of it. Rather, the vastness of the thing creates a kind of *secret incredulity*. They have a notion that the thing may not, in reality, take place; and, thinking of no medium, they secretly flatter themselves with the hope of meeting with no punishment at all, and consequently indulge the vain hope of going to heaven with a state of mind exceedingly unfit for it, rather than suffer
a punish-

a punishment so vastly disproportioned to the degree of their guilt. Whereas, if they had been taught to expect only a *just* and *adequate* punishment for all their offences here; and especially such as was necessary to their purification and happiness, their minds might have acquiesced in it, they might have believed it firmly and practically, and such a belief might really have influenced their conduct.

But lastly, it is perhaps more agreeable to the analogy of nature and (this guide only I am now following) to expect, that, as the greater part of natural productions never arrive at their proper maturity, but perish long before they have attained to it, so the bulk of mankind, who never attain to any high degrees of wisdom or virtue, should finally perish also, and be intirely blotted out of the creation, as unworthy to continue in it; while the few who are wise and virtuous, like full ripe fruits, are reserved for future use. And there is something so dreadful in the idea of *annihilation*, as will, perhaps, affect the mind of some persons more than the fear of future torments, with continuance of life, and consequently with secret hope.

These speculations, it must be owned, are, in a great measure, random and vague, but they are the best, as it appears to me, that we can form to ourselves by the light of nature. What revelation teaches

teaches us concerning so difficult but important a subject, we shall see in its proper place.

Such are the conclusions which nature teaches, or rather which she *assents to*, concerning the nature, and perfections of God, the rule of human duty, and the future expectations of mankind. I say *assents to*, because, if we examine the actual state of this kind of knowledge, in any part of the world, not enlightened by revelation, we shall find their ideas of God, of virtue, and of a future state, to have been very lame and imperfect, as will be shewn more particularly when we consider, in the next part of this course, the *want* and the *evidence* of DIVINE REVELATION.



I N S T I T U T E S

••

NATURAL AND REVEALED

• R E L I G I O N.

PART II.

CONTAINING

The Evidences of the Jewish and Christian
Revelations.

THE
INTRODUCTION.

IN the first section of this part of the work, I have made great use of a treatise of Dr. Leland's, intitled, *The advantage and necessity of the Christian Revelation, shewed from the state of Religion in the antient Heathen world*; and as all the articles I have mentioned are much more largely discussed in that excellent work, where the proper authorities are alledged, I thought it unnecessary to make any particular reference to authors here. If any thing in the account that I have given of antient or modern unbelievers be controverted, it is that work, and not mine, which must be examined for the purpose.

Upon the subject of *prophecy*, I have also made much use of Bishop Newton's very valuable discourses; and I think it better to make this general acknowledgment, than to refer to these writers page by page in the course of my work.

My

My readers must not forget that I am writing for the use of *young persons*, and therefore that I am glad to avail myself of any thing that I can meet with, which I think proper for their use. I do not recollect, however, that I have, in any other part of this volume, made so much use of any particular writer, as to think it worth while to make any acknowledgement for it; except, perhaps, my borrowing from *Dr. Doddridge's Lectures*, some arguments against the pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus.

Let it be observed, also, that writing, as I do, for the instruction of *youth*, though I have not knowingly concealed any *objection*, which, in my own opinion has the appearance of much weight, I have not thought proper to trouble them with the discussion of every subtle cavil, which has at any time been advanced against revelation in general, or christianity in particular; because I consider some of them as the effect of such manifest perverseness, as would create difficulties in the clearest cause in the world. I have mentioned so many arguments in favour of revelation, and have replied to so many of the objections to it, that, considering the general plan of my work, I judged it to be altogether superfluous to advance any thing more, whether there be any weight, or no weight at all, in what I have written.

Trite

Trite as the subject of this part of my work is, it is far from being exhausted; but, like every other subject of very great importance, it is hardly possible for any person to give much attention to it, without finding either some new arguments for it, or, at least, setting the old ones in some new and more striking point of light. Some merit of this kind will, perhaps, be allowed to me, especially as far as it respects a commodious *general distribution* of my materials; which I flatter myself will be thought to be easier, and more natural, than that of others who have written upon the same subject, and to be calculated to exhibit the evidences of revelation with peculiar strength and clearness.

Fully satisfied as I myself am of the truth of christianity, and of the sufficiency of the proofs which I have, in this treatise, advanced in favour of it, I am by no means sanguine in my expectations from what I have done, any farther than that it may be of use in the instruction of the *young*, the *ignorant*, or the *unsettled*, which was my primary object. No person who knows much of the world can expect that *confirmed unbelievers* will so much as look into it, much less that they will give it a deliberate and impartial perusal. They will presume that they have already thought enough upon the subject, and will not choose to disturb their minds with any farther discussion of ~~it~~ ^{the question} which they have long ago decided, or ~~change~~ ^{change} that course

of life into which they were led, and to which they have been accustomed in consequence of it.

I mention this circumstance with no other view than to admonish young persons of the very great care they ought to take in forming their judgments upon a subject of so much importance as this; since in the course of a few years, the effect of the impression to which their minds must necessarily be subject, will be either a firm and joyful persuasion of the truth of christianity, a great indifference to it, and neglect of it, or an obstinate and gloomy unbelief. The first of these states of mind I cannot help considering as, in the highest degree, favourable to virtue and happiness, and the last to be, in as great a degree, unfriendly to both. I use the word *gloomy* in speaking of the state of an unbeliever's mind, because I consider my own most cheerful prospects as derived from that faith which he disclaims; and unless I be wholly mistaken with respect to the object of true christian faith, every defender of it must necessarily have the prejudices of the vicious and profligate against him, and the good will of all the friends of virtue.

If the bible contain a true history, we can no longer entertain the least doubt, or be under any uncertainty, concerning the existence, or the moral government of God. We are sure that a being of infinite power and wisdom is the author of every thing that we behold, that he constantly inspects,
and

and attends to the interest of all his creatures, nothing that he has made being at any time neglected or overlooked by him; and, more especially, that he is influenced by a most intense affection for all his rational offspring; that he is *good and ready to forgive*, and to receive into favour all who sincerely repent of the sins they have committed, and endeavour to conform to his will for the future. If christianity be true, we can entertain no doubt with respect to a future life, but are absolutely certain that, though we must all die, we shall *all be made alive again*, that Christ will come, by the appointment of God his father, to judge the quick and the dead, and to give to every man according to his works.

Now the firm belief of these important truths (concerning which there are great doubts and difficulties on the light of nature, but none at all upon the supposition of the truth of christianity) cannot fail to elevate the sentiments, and ennoble the nature of man. It will effectually support us under all the trials of life, and give us hope and joy in the hour of death. On the other hand, a state of doubt and uncertainty with respect to these articles of faith must make every well disposed mind (which cannot but most earnestly wish them to be true) anxious and unhappy; and a total disbelief of them must tend to de-

base the soul, and prepare a man for giving into every kind of vice and excess to which he is strongly tempted. When his views and prospects are narrow and confined, his pursuits will be so too. To adopt a coarse, but just observation, which has been made with respect to this subject, if a man expects to *die* like a dog, it cannot but be supposed that he will also *live* like one.

If, contrary to my expectations, an unbeliever should have the curiosity to look into the following treatise, I would premise to him, that he is to consider it as containing nothing more than my own particular view of the evidences of christianity; that if he perceives any thing weak or unguarded in what I have advanced, it behoves himself, as well as me, to consider whether the cause in general will not admit of a better defence; that he must look into other defences of christianity for the supply of any deficiencies which he may find in this; and not think himself justified in his unbelief, till, after an examination of *his own*, an examination truly impartial, and earnest, becoming the importance of the subject, he is satisfied, that not *what has passed for christianity*, but, *what is really so*, is altogether indefensible, having had its source in enthusiasm, or imposture, or both.

Besides

Besides the books I have already mentioned in this introduction, or which I have occasionally quoted in the body of the work, I would recommend to those persons who would wish to have more satisfaction with respect to several branches of the evidences of christianity, the following treatises, several of which are not large or expensive, among many others which may have great merit of the same kind, though I happen not to be so well acquainted with them. *Farmer on miracles*, 8vo. *Price's Dissertations*, 8vo. *West on the resurrection of Christ*, 8vo. *Lyttelton on the conversion of St. Paul*, 8vo. *Letters of some Jews to Voltaire*, 2 vols. 8vo. *The Criterion*, 8vo. *Lardner's Jewish and heathen testimonies*, 4 vols. 4to. and his *History of the writers of the New Testament*, 3 vols. 8vo. which may be had separate from his larger work on the *Credibility*. *Butler's analogy*, 8vo. *Leland's view of the deistical writers*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Fortin's discourses on the truth of the christian religion*, and his *Remarks on ecclesiastical history*, 5 vols. 8vo. *Duchal's sermons*, 8vo. *Macknight on the truth of the gospel history*, 4to. *Doddridge's three sermons on the evidences of christianity*, especially the second, 12 mo. *Sharp's arguments for the truth of the christian religion*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Lowman on the Ritual*, and also on the *Civil government of the Hebrews*, 2 vols. 8vo. and especially *Hartley's view*

of the evidences of christianity, in the 2d vol. of his *Observations on man*.

Several of the above-mentioned writers undertake to defend articles which, in my opinion, do not belong to christianity, as will be seen in the remainder of this work, as well as in my other writings; and they consequently make the defence of christianity more difficult than was necessary; but, notwithstanding this, they all contain observations that are well worth the closest attention, in order both to evince the truth of revelation, and to confirm the faith of those who already believe in it.

It ought to be observed upon this subject, that *faith* is not one absolute and determinate thing, but that it admits of *degrees*; proceeding from a simple *assent* to a proposition, which arises from a bare preponderancy of the arguments in favour of it, and advancing by the most insensible gradation, to that *fulnefs of persuasion*, which arises from the perception of the greatest clearness and strength of the evidence for it. The passions and affections, if they be at all moved by a bare assent, will be extremely languid, though the thing itself be of the greatest moment; whereas a full persuasion of the reality of an interesting object excites the most vigorous and fervent emotions. The difference of the impression they make upon the mind is properly

perly compared to the effect of an object placed at a very great, or a very small distance. If any thing in the conduct of life depend upon belief, we shall, in the former case, be hardly influenced by it at all; a very small motive being sufficient to overpower the effect of so superficial a faith; at best we shall be irresolute and inconstant; whereas in the latter case, we shall be determined to vigorous and immediate action.

It is, therefore, a matter of the greatest consequence, not only that unbelievers be made converts to the christian faith, but that the faith of believers themselves be strengthened, and they be thereby converted from merely *nominal* into *real* christians, who live and act under an habitual and lively sense of the great truths of christianity; and who, in all their enjoyments and pursuits in this world, never lose sight of their relation to another and a better.

Now faith is *increased* by the very same means by which it is first *generated*, viz. by an attention to the proper evidences, and a frequent contemplation of the object of it. Those persons, therefore, who call themselves christians, and who must be supposed to wish to feel and act as becomes christians, should study the evidences of their religion; they should meditate upon the life, discourses, and miracles of Christ; and make

familiar to their minds every thing relating to the history and propagation of christianity in the world. They should both frequently read the scriptures, and also other books which tend to prove their truth, and illustrate their contents.

I shall think myself very happy, and that I gain a very valuable end, if this part of my work, though it be of no use to the conversion of unbelievers, should be a means of *confirming the faith* of any professing christians, leading them to a better understanding of the reasons of their faith, and making them think more frequently, and more highly of their privileges and obligations as christians.

To this part of the work I shall subjoin *An Essay* (published originally in the *Theological Repository*) *on the analogy there is between the methods by which the perfection and happiness of men are promoted according to the dispensations of natural and revealed religion.* These, I have there endeavoured to shew, are exceedingly similar, the immediate object in both being a gradual extension of the views, and an enlargement of the comprehension of the human mind. This, however, is a consideration on which I do not lay much stress. It is acknowledged not to be sufficient to produce conviction in the minds of unbelievers, but it is hoped

hoped that it exhibits such a *presumptive argument* in favour of the scheme of revelation, as is calculated to give some additional satisfaction to those who are already the lovers and friends of revealed religion; though to persons who have not a philosophical turn of mind, it may seem to be too abstruse, and to have too much refinement in it.



P A R T II.

T H E

E V I D E N C E S

O F

R E V E A L E D R E L I G I O N.

WE have seen how far unassisted reason has been able to carry us in our inquiries concerning the being, perfections, and providence of God, and also concerning the duty and final expectations of mankind ; or rather how far unassisted reason *might* have been able to carry us in these inquiries. For though it be true that all the deductions we have made are derived from the consideration of nothing but what we *feel* or *see*, yet these conclusions were never, in fact, drawn from those premises, by any of the human race ; and it is in vain that we look for so complete a system of morals among the most intelligent of mankind. Indeed, the very imperfect state of this important kind of knowledge in the heathen world, and the growing corruption of morals, which was the consequence of it, furnish a strong proof of the expediency, if not of the absolute necessity of divine revelation.

CHAP.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

IT will be acknowledged that, of all the heathen nations, the greatest progress in useful knowledge is to be looked for among the Greeks, who greatly improved upon the stock of knowledge which they borrowed from Egypt and the East. It is, therefore, doing the greatest justice to this subject, to consider the state of knowledge and virtue among these nations.

The Greek philosophers had not failed to give particular attention to the subject of morals and theology; some of the most conspicuous of their sects having had no other object; and yet, though they had flourished, unmolested, for the space of near six hundred years before the time of Christ, and had frequently divided and subdivided themselves (the leaders of every new sect pretending to improve upon all who had gone before them) none of them attained to any thing like a full conviction concerning the unity, the attributes, and moral government of God. They had very imperfect ideas of the just extent of moral virtue; and the knowledge they had of a future state added little or no strength to its obligations. The practice also of the Gentile world was such as might be expected from the ge-

neral corruption of their moral and religious principles.

All these particulars are sufficiently known to the learned, and may be known to any person who will take a little pains to acquaint himself with the state of knowledge and virtue in the Gentile world; but as these things are not sufficiently known to the generality of christians, and the superficial thinkers among us have been greatly misled with respect to this subject, I shall select a few particular facts, which may give those who are attentive and unprejudiced a pretty just idea of what the most enlightened of our species actually were before the promulgation of christianity.

SECTION I.

Of the origin and corruption of natural religion in general.

PERSONS who begin to think upon these subjects when they are arrived to years of maturity, and who find in themselves a full persuasion concerning the great truths of natural religion, concerning the being of God, the unity of his nature, and his moral character and government; as also concerning the rule of human duty, and the
the

the doctrine of a future state, do not sufficiently consider how they came by that knowledge; and thinking the whole system to be very rational and natural, they are apt to conclude that it must therefore have been very *obvious*, and that all the particulars of it could not but have been known to all mankind.

But, in fact, there is no man living whose knowledge of these subjects was not derived from instruction, and the information of others; and therefore there is no man living who, from his own sense of things and experience, can be deemed a competent judge of what the powers of his own nature are able to do in this case. For the solution of this important question, we must have recourse to history only, and see what mankind have *in fact* attained to in a variety of circumstances.

Now it appears, by the most careful investigation, that all the useful and practical knowledge of religion, of which we find any traces among the Eastern nations and the Greeks, was, by their own confession, derived to them from their ancestors, in more early ages. Among the Greeks it was more particularly acknowledged, that their wisdom and religion came from the Barbarians, and especially those who were from the East, many of whom arrived in Greece by the way of Thrace. It is well known to have been a long time before men pretended to *reason* at all upon subjects of morals

als or religion. The celebrated *wisdom of the East*, and also that of the earliest Greek philosophers, consisted in nothing else than in delivering the *traditions of the antients*.

It is another remarkable fact, that it is in the earliest ages of the heathen world that we are to look for the purest notions of religion among them; and that, as we descend into the lower ages, we find religion growing more and more corrupt, even among the most intelligent of the heathens; who arrived at great refinements of taste, and made considerable improvements in science. This was the case universally till the promulgation of christianity in the world.

History informs us that the worship of one God, without images, was in all nations prior to Polytheism. Varro says, expressly, that the Romans worshipped God without images for one hundred and seventy years. This was also the case with all the nations of the East, with the Greeks, and even throughout this Western part of the world. We also find that the belief of future rewards and punishments was never questioned among the Greeks, till they began to reason upon the subject; when, rejecting the old traditions, and not finding satisfactory evidence of any other kind, they came at length to disbelieve them. This scepticism and infidelity, was introduced by the philosophers, and was from them diffused through

through all ranks of men, both in Greece and Rome.

These remarkable facts certainly favour the supposition, that the most important doctrines of natural religion were communicated by divine revelation to the first parents of mankind.

We even find the most acute of modern unbelievers acknowledging the improbability that the doctrine of the divine unity, and others above-mentioned, should naturally have been the first religion of mankind. Bolingbroke says that Polytheism and Idolatry have so close a connection with the ideas and affections of rude and ignorant men, that one of them could not fail to be their first religious principle, and the other their first religious practice; and Mr. Hume, after discussing the matter very minutely, acknowledges, that the doctrine of one God is not naturally the religion of mankind.

The view of this writer is to make it probable that the rudiments of religious knowledge were acquired by mankind in the same manner as the rudiments of other kinds of knowledge, and that similar advances were made in both; but the testimony of history is uniformly and clearly against him. Indeed it cannot, surely, be supposed, that, according to his principles, the divine being should leave mankind under a necessity of forming
either

either no religion at all, or a false and dangerous one.

Is it not, therefore, more agreeable to our ideas of the wisdom and goodness of God, to suppose that, at the same time that he instructed the ~~first~~ parents of mankind how to provide for their subsistence in the world, and imparted to them that knowledge which was necessary for the purpose (without which they must soon have perished) and when he taught them the rudiments of speech (without which, notwithstanding their superior capacities, they would have been little superior to brute animals, perhaps, for several centuries) he gave them to understand the more important particulars concerning their relation to himself, as their creator, preserver, and final judge; and that he instructed them in those acts of religious worship which correspond to these relations; and also that he enjoined them the observance of the most important rules of social duty, and the proper government of themselves in other respects? All the knowledge we have of history agrees with this supposition, and the thing is far from being improbable, or absurd in itself.

When this primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, there seems to have been no probability that it would ever have been restored to its original purity by natural means. Rather, the continued operation of the same causes might be expected

expected to render it more and more depraved. The only probable resource was the knowledge of the studious and the learned. But the knowledge of the Greek philosophers was confined to their professed disciples, few of them taking any pains to enlighten the minds of the bulk of the people. Indeed, they generally held the common people in great contempt, considering them as incapable of being benefited by their instructions. And, on the other hand, the bulk of the people either despised the philosophers, or thought themselves unconcerned in any thing that passed within their schools. All that they minded were the religious rites of their country, as directed by their priests; and the philosophers themselves were so far from attempting any reformation of the prevailing idolatry (though it often countenanced the most abominable vices) that they both conformed to it themselves, and enforced conformity to it in others, even as a duty of moral obligation.

At length, however, more and more of the common people began to listen to the philosophers, and then all the remains of the old and useful traditions, of the world being made by God, and that men would be called to an account for their conduct in this world, when they should live in another, were given up. For the great object of the Greek philosophers was to exclude the interposition of the deity both in the formation of the
world

world and every thing else, supposing it to have been formed either by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, or in some other necessary and mechanical way; and the boasted end of many of their sects was to deliver the minds of men from the fear of the Gods, and the terrors of a world to come.

It must be observed that there is a striking difference between the moral writings of those philosophers who wrote before, and those who wrote after the promulgation of christianity. The latter lean much more to what has been shewn to have been the primitive religion of mankind, and they inculcate purer morals. This, though they do not acknowledge it, was, no doubt, the effect of christianity, with the maxims of which, and the happy influence of them, the philosophers must have been acquainted. In various other respects, also, the moral state of the heathen world was much improved by christianity. Eusebius enumerates many absurd and vicious customs, which, having prevailed before the promulgation of it, grew into disuse afterwards. The philosophers, however, notwithstanding the improvement of their moral system, were the greatest opposers of christianity, and the strongest bulwark of idolatry; and when the glaring absurdities of the popular worship were exposed by christian writers, they invented plausible apologies for it.

That

That I may impress the minds of those who are not much read in antient history with a just sense of the value of revelation, I shall point out the several steps by which the primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, and give some idea of the consequence of that corruption with respect to the morals of the people; and that such persons may be more fully satisfied how much we are, in fact, indebted to revelation, even where natural reason has had the freest scope, I shall, at the same time, shew how very nearly the sentiments of the most celebrated modern unbelievers, who had an opportunity of knowing, and selecting whatever they approved from revelation, tally with those of the heathen philosophers, who never heard of it, with respect to the important doctrines of the unity, the moral character and government of God, the rule of human duty, and the expectation of a state of retribution after death.

SECTION II.

Of the corruption of theology in particular.

THE primary and great cause of idolatry was low and unworthy notions of God, from whence men were led to consider all that we ascribe to God, as too much for *one being*, what no one being

being could have made, or could properly attend to afterwards. They also thought it beneath the supreme being to concern himself with the government of the inferior parts of the creation. They, therefore, imagined that he had *deputies* to act under him; and the first objects to which they ascribed this delegated power, were the sun, moon, and stars, which, on account of their splendour, and beneficial influence, they supposed to be either animated themselves, or directed by intelligent beings. That the worship of the stars, and other heavenly bodies, was the earliest species of idolatry, is agreeable to all antient history.

The temptation to this kind of idolatry appears, from the book of Job, to have been very strong, in the earlier ages of the world; and it is evident, from several circumstances, that it had a very firm hold on the minds of men. It was for affirming the stars to be inanimate bodies, which was considered as denying their divinity, and for advancing that the sun is a body of fire, and that the moon is a habitable world, that Anaxagoras was accused at Athens for *impiety*. Even Socrates thought him guilty of great presumption and arrogance; and Plato speaks of his opinion as leading to atheism, and a denial of divine providence. This worship of the stars is what he himself chiefly recommended to the people.

Next

Next to the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, succeeded that of *dead men*. This arose from customs which were originally intended to express no more than a just regard for their merit and services; but from this they proceeded, gradually, to acts of worship properly religious, erecting altars to them, and praying to them in any place and at any time. This introduced the worship of images in human forms, whereas they had before contented themselves with erecting pillars, or even consecrating rude stones and altars to their deities. The philosophers were far from discouraging this practice of worshipping dead heroes. Cicero in particular much approves of the custom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as Gods.

During this progress of idolatry, the worship of the true God was gradually superseded, and the rites of it became intermixed with those of the inferior deities. What contributed to confound these things the more was, that to most of the heavenly bodies, and also to deified men, were ascribed the names and attributes of the one true God, till the rites peculiar to each of them could be no longer distinguished; and at length the worship of inferior beings engrossed all the regards of mankind, the worship of the true God being entirely excluded.

Besides the worship of the celestial Gods, and

of dead men, we also find Gods of an intermediate nature, such as are now usually called *genii*. Of these there were supposed to be various classes, and the worship that was paid to them made a considerable article in the heathen system.

As if these three sources could not supply divinities enow, we find that even different *names* of the same God, and acknowledged to be the same, were made to pass for different deities, and had their peculiar religious rites and worship. Similar to this are the virgin Marys' of different places in Popish countries. It was another source of the multiplicity of heathen Gods, that the *symbols* and *images* of their principal Gods were converted into deities, and made the objects of religious worship, as Fire among the Chaldeans, and the Bull, and other animals, among the Egyptians.

There can be no doubt but that the images erected to their Gods were generally supposed to have divine powers in them. The philosopher Stilpo, of Megara, was banished by the Areopagus at Athens for asserting that the statue of Minerva, made by Phidias, was not a God; and all that he ventured to alledge in his defence, was that this celebrated piece of statuary was not a *God*, but a *Goddeſs*.

Farther, all the *parts of the universe* being considered as so many. parts of the divinity by some, or expressions of his power by others, were made

made objects of religious worship. Even the qualities and *affections* of mankind, and also the *accidents* to which they are exposed were worshipped, as if a separate intelligence had presided over each of them; and some of these were not only natural evils, but even things of a morally vicious nature. Thus there was at Rome an altar to the *Fever*, another to *Evil Fortune*, and others to *Lust* and *Pleasure*. At Athens there was a religious service appropriated to *Impudence*, and it was done by the advice of *Epimenides*, who passed for a great diviner and a prophet.

We find, in fact, that deities of a bad character engrossed more of the attention of the heathen world, in general, than those of which they entertained a good opinion, these being thought to be of themselves disposed to do them kind offices. Even Plutarch cites with approbation the opinion of *Xenocrates*, who, speaking of unlucky days and festivals, which were celebrated by scourging, beatings, lamentations, fastings, ill-boding words, and obscene expressions, said that these things could not be pleasing to the good Demons, but that there are in the air about us certain great and powerful natures, of cross and morose tempers, which take pleasure in these things, and having obtained them, do no farther mischief.

The Egyptians paid divine honours not only to the useful animals, as the Ibis and Ichneumon, but

also to the Crocodile, and other noxious animals. Worshipping some of these Gods from love, and others from fear, we are not surprized to find that the same Gods which they worshipped in some of their religious festivals, were the constant objects of their curses and execrations in others.

Such were the Gods whom we find to have been the objects of religious worship among the most celebrated heathen nations; and from the idea which has been given of their characters, we may easily imagine what kind of attention they were supposed to give to human affairs; but the doctrine of a *providence*, without which the belief of a God can have no influence, was, on other accounts, exceedingly imperfect and confused among the heathens. It was, more especially, not a little embarrassed with their notions of the influence of *fate* and *fortune* on human affairs. They even imagined that there was a fate which was uncontrollable by the greatest of their Gods; and *Fortune* they considered as a deity altogether blind and capricious, so that no kind of conduct could recommend them to her favourable notice more than another. Besides, the providence of the greatest of their Gods was hardly supposed to extend any farther than to the outward conveniences of life. They therefore prayed to them for life, health, riches, or power, but seldom or never for wisdom, or any moral endowment.

This

This, it will be said, was the religion of the *vulgar*; but the same was the religion which the philosophers conformed to, and enjoined. They even laid great stress upon the strict observance of it, and made it a matter of moral obligation. Indeed, their own real sentiments were not much more favourable to virtue. The learned Varro seems to value himself, as having deserved well of his fellow citizens, because he had not only given an account of the Gods which the Romans ought to worship, but of the powers and offices belonging to each of them, that the people might not be at a loss whom to address on any particular occasion. Socrates, the Stoics, and the best of the philosophers generally speak of *the Gods*, in the plural number, and seldom or never distinguish any one being as supreme with respect to the rest. Plato, indeed, in one passage of his works, speaks of one supreme God, but as a thing that was not fit to be communicated to the vulgar, and in general he also speaks of *the Gods* in the plural number. Plutarch, who lived in the times of christianity, acknowledges, indeed, one supreme being; but he also admits of a co-eternal evil principle.

The generality of the philosophers held the whole animated system of the world, or at least the soul of it, (of which every separate intelligence was a part) to be God. Balbus, among a number of excellent things in proof of the being of a God,

(in that celebrated treatise of Cicero concerning *the nature of the Gods*) maintains that the world is an animal, and has intelligence, that it is reasonable, wise, and happy, and therefore a God. The great argument of the Stoics for the unity of God, is that there is but one world. In later times some of the philosophers endeavoured to turn the popular religion into allegory, pretending that Jupiter, for instance, meant the air, and Juno the earth, &c.

Many of the philosophers denied that there is any providence of the Gods at all. Pliny, the great naturalist, represents it as ridiculous to imagine that the God who is supreme gives any attention to the affairs of men ; and many were of opinion that the Gods attend to the greater events of the world only. Indeed, it was the object of many of the sects of philosophy, and particularly of the Epicureans, who were very numerous about the time of Christ, and especially in the higher ranks of life, to exclude the interposition of God both in making and governing the world.

Of what advantage can such a religion as this, the outlines of which I have been describing, be supposed to have been to the interest of virtue and good morals. Indeed, *religion* and *morals* were never considered by the heathens as having any proper connection at all. It was never supposed to be any
part

part of the business of a priest to teach the people virtue, their office being confined to the due performance of religious rites and ceremonies. When the Gods were supposed to be offended, and public calamities were considered as tokens of the divine displeasure, they never had recourse to repentance and reformation as a means of averting their anger; but always to some more exact or more expensive ceremony. The usual method of making an atonement at Rome, was a solemn procession, and driving a nail into the temple of Jupiter. Lord Herbert acknowledges, that all the religion of the Gentiles was sunk into mere superstition.

Every thing that the common people had any opportunity of hearing or seeing belonging to religion, among the Greeks or Romans, instead of inspiring good sentiments, and leading to regularity of conduct, generally tended to inflame their passions, and furnished excuses for the undue gratification of them. Public games and plays, in which the flagitious actions of the Gods were represented, were considered as acts of religion, encouraged by their deities, and celebrated in honour of them; and several circumstances lead us to think that they had a very immoral tendency. In Terence we find a young man encouraging himself in an act of lewdness by the example of Jupiter, and the Cretans apologized for their addictedness to the

love of boys by the example of the same God and Ganymede.

Indeed, it was hardly possible to attend upon, and especially to assist in the festivals of some of the heathen Gods, without committing actual wickedness, and contracting the very worst of habits. Bacchus was worshipped with the most indecent revelling and drunkenness, and the greatest philosophers never remonstrated against such practices. It was a saying of Plato, that to drink to excess was not allowable, except upon the festival of that God who is the giver of wine. The licentiousness of such religious rites as these was so notorious, that it was not thought safe for married women to go to the feast of Bacchus, Ceres, or Cybele. Hence a saying of Aristippus, concerning a remarkably chaste woman, that she could not be corrupted even at the Bacchanals.

In the *Ludi Florales* at Rome, the chief part of the solemnity was managed by a set of shameless prostitutes, who ran up and down naked, dancing in lascivious postures, and this custom was not discountenanced but encouraged by the gravest magistrates. Strabo relates, that there was at Corinth a temple of Venus, so rich, that it maintained above a thousand prostitutes, dedicated to the service of the Goddess. Herodotus, and the most credible historians assure us, that by a law of the Babylonians, every woman, a native of the country, was obliged to receive

ceive the embraces of the first stranger that offered himself in the precincts of some of their temples, before she could be married. There were customs similar to this in many other parts of the east. Even sodomy and bestiality were openly practised in some of their temples, and the figures of the parts of generation, carved in wood, were carried about in many of their processions, and had divine honours paid to them.

The mischiefs of this religion were not confined to the encouragement of the softer vices. It even authorised the most horrible *cruelties*, so that the religious rites of the heathens were shocking to humanity. In some of the festivals of Bacchus, the priests used to tear and devour the entrails of goats, raw and reeking, in imitation of their God. The priests of Cybele castrated themselves, and in their procession made the most hideous noises and howling, cutting themselves till the blood gushed out, as they went along. The priests of Baal, also, were wont to cut and slash themselves in the same manner. At Sparta boys were often whipped in honour of Diana till they died, in which case they were honoured with a public and splendid funeral; and, in some towns of Arcadia, women were whipped with the same severity.

Human sacrifices prevailed all over the heathen world, and in no country were they more common than among our ancestors the ancient Britons.

On some occasions the Britons were used to construct large images of wicker work, which they filled with living men, and especially prisoners taken in war; and, setting fire to it, they put to death in this most cruel manner, all the unhappy wretches it contained. In other respects, also, the religion of the Britons was no better, but worse, and more barbarous than that of the Greeks and Romans. The whole country was held in a state of the most slavish subjection to their priests, the Druids, who had a power of excluding persons from the privilege of attending their sacred rites; after which excommunication, the person who had incurred it was cut off from all human intercourse, and every advantage of civil society. The exercise of this horrid religion was, by Augustus, prohibited in Gaul, under pain of death. The Britons were not at that time subject to the Romans.

Both the Peruvians and the Mexicans used human victims, and the latter are said to have sacrificed, at one particular time only, five thousand prisoners of war.

Human sacrifices were even used in the Roman empire, as Porphyry, a heathen writer, informs us, till the time of the Emperor Adrian, who ordered them in most places to be abolished, but this was after the promulgation of christianity. The same *writer says*, that in his own times, and in the city of Rome

Rome itself, it was the custom to sacrifice a man at the feast of Jupiter Latiaris; and Lactantius, a christian writer says, that the same thing was done in his time.

These human sacrifices were thought to be of all others, the most acceptable offerings to their Gods, being the strongest proof they could give of their devotedness to them; and so far were public calamities from leading them to renounce this horrid custom, that they were always a means of confirming them in it. It had grown into a custom at Carthage to sacrifice not *freemen*, as they had done originally, but only *slaves*, or prisoners taken in war, at the feast of Saturn; but after a war in which they were great sufferers, they concluded that their losses were owing to the displeasure of the Gods, on account of their ignoble offerings, and immediately they sacrificed three hundred youths of the best families in Carthage.

Among other detestable methods of divination, one was the murder of infants, and others, who were sacrificed on purpose, that by raking into their entrails, they might gain an insight into futurity, as appears from the testimony of Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Juvenal, Tacitus, Philostratus, Porphyry and many other learned Pagans, as well as from the intimations of the sacred writers.

When the blood of young children was made use of, it was not deemed sufficient in some cases merely

to put them to death, for it was imagined to be necessary for their purpose that their death should be lingering and painful.

The Cimbri ripped open the bowels of human victims, and from them formed a judgment concerning future events, and the Celtæ divined by the agonies and convulsions of men offered in sacrifice, and from the effusion of their blood.

All heathen nations, when they wanted to pry into futurity, or to engage the assistance of their Gods in any enterprize, at the best, had recourse to the most absurd methods of learning their will ; as by observing the appearance of the entrails of beasts offered in sacrifice, the flight of birds, or the ravings of men and women, who had the art of throwing themselves into convulsions, and pretending to be inspired. The solemn *auspices* of the Romans consisted in observing the manner in which chickens pecked their food, and to this every Roman general was obliged to give the closest attention every morning. A thousand things of this nature might be enumerated, every heathen nation abounding with them ; and there are many remains of them in all countries of the world, the nations of christendom, and this country, by no means excepted. All these methods of consulting the Gods could rise from nothing but the lowest, and the most absurd notions of the divine power and providence.

It

It will be said that philosophy must certainly have been some check upon these enormities; but, strange as it may seem, this does not appear to have been the case. Human sacrifices, indeed, became less frequent, and were, in a manner, abolished both in Greece and Rome; but this does not seem to have been owing to the philosophy, but to the greater humanity of later times. The philosophers were so far from attempting the reformation of any religious rite, however abominable, that they are known to have encouraged the most absurd of all their superstitions, and to have connived at least, at the most scandalous of them. Socrates, and their best moralists, strongly recommend even the divinations, and oracles of their times; and when Aristotle expresses his disapprobation of obscene pictures, he excepts those of the Gods, which religion had sanctified.

If we consider the real sentiments of the philosophers, abstracted from any relation to the people, or connection with civil government, they will be found by no means to furnish a sufficient foundation for a spirit of just and useful devotion, consisting of the sentiments of reverence and love to God, confidence in his providence, and a regard to virtue from his authority. Those who are thought to have had the most sublime notions concerning the deity, after the times of christianity, seem to have been against all external worship of the su-

preme God. Cicero, in all his treatise concerning *human duty*, never draws any argument to enforce the practice of it from the authority, or command of God. Maximus Tyrius has a whole differtation to prove that we ought not to pray at all, and Seneca represents it as altogether needless to apply to God by prayer. *Make thyself happy*, says he. But the language of the Stoics was not uniform, or consistent, on this, or on several other subjects. Notwithstanding they speak much of God, or the Gods, they never mention repentance, and confession of sin, as any part of our duty.

If the heathen philosophers had been impressed with a proper reverence for God, they could never have indulged themselves in the indecent practice of *common swearing*, which they seem to have done without the least restraint. The dialogues of Plato, in which Socrates is always a speaker, are full of oaths; and so are the works of Marcus Antoninus.

It will be said that such a religion, and such philosophy, were the produce of an early age; and that it may be presumed that, in time, men would have formed juster notions of the attributes and moral government of God, have attained to a practical and steady dependence upon him, and have expressed their devotional sentiments by proper acts of homage. But we shall be obliged to *give up* this flattering idea, when we consider what
has

has been advanced upon these subjects by philosophers of a more enlightened age, who have abandoned revelation, and have pretended, at least, to be guided by nature only.

Mr. Hobbes says, that whatever is incorporeal is nothing at all, and he makes religion a business of the state only. Mr. Hume subverts the very foundation of all our reasoning from effects to causes, so that from what we see round us, we cannot with certainty infer an intelligent author. Mr. Blount, the author of a celebrated treatise called *The oracles of reason*, represents the opinion of the origin of good and evil from two different eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, as not unreasonable; and he makes objections to the duty of prayer. Mr. Chubb expressly denies the doctrine of a particular providence, and not only speaks of the impropriety of praying to God, but even suggests a suspicion that it may be displeasing to the divine being.

Bolingbroke, who has been much extolled as a writer and philosopher, blames even the Pagan theists for flattering human nature, when they taught that a good man imitates God. He will admit of no proof that God is a lover of mankind, and made man to be happy. He altogether rejects the scripture doctrine of a particular providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men. He acknowledges

that God is a being of almighty power, and infinite wisdom; but he says, that we must not pretend to ascribe to him any *moral* attributes, as holiness, justice, or goodness. He says that he neither has these qualities, nor any thing equivalent to them.

SECTION III.

Of the moral sentiments of the Heathens.

HAVING taken a view of the state of theology in the Gentile world, I shall proceed to consider some of their general maxims relating to *morals*, and especially such as were patronized by the philosophers; and we cannot but be sensible that they were by no means favourable to virtue, taken in its just extent. At the close of this I shall also shew how modern unbelievers have relapsed into the same loose kind of morality.

Many of the philosophers maintained that there is nothing just or unjust by nature, but only by positive law and custom. This was the opinion of Theodorus, Archelaus, and Aristippus, of the Alexandrian school, which prevailed the most a little before the time of Christ. All the earlier philosophers allowed too much to the obligation of positive law. Even Socrates himself represents it

as essential to the character of a good man to obey, without reserve, the laws of his country. On the other hand, Epicurus taught that a man is to do every thing for his own sake, his own happiness being the great rule of life.

The most distinguished systems of morals among the Greeks was that of the Stoics, and it is generally esteemed to have been peculiarly favourable to virtue. It carries, indeed, an air of greatness and sublimity in it; but when examined will be found to be no friend to the humane and pleasing virtues. It was the great maxim of the Stoics that the soul of man, being of the same nature with God, is self sufficient for virtue and happiness, insomuch that it is not in the power of the Gods themselves to make a good man unhappy. Nay, so arrogantly did some of them talk, that they represented men as superior to the Gods, saying that these are wise by the necessity of their nature, but men by choice. Such notions as these could not but lay a foundation for a very dangerous and insufferable pride.

To support this strange hypothesis, with respect to a world in which the wisest and best of men are subject to pain and death, they were obliged to maintain, and they did it resolutely, that pain is no evil, and that length of time makes no addition to happiness. To promote an insensibility to pain, they maintained that men must

sup-

suppress all passions, whether they be of the nature of love or hatred. They would not allow of anger, even at vice or injustice; and to make it the easier for persons to stifle their resentment on these occasions, they frequently represented all crimes as involuntary, and consequently such things as no person could have any reason to be surprized or offended at, especially since nobody could be a sufferer but the injurious person himself. For it was the great maxim of Epictetus, that it is naturally impossible for one man to be in fault, and another to be the sufferer. It is certainly very hard to conceive what real virtue such maxims as these could produce; and we shall see their mischievous tendency in several respects hereafter.

It is not difficult to point out several general maxims relating to morals, among modern unbelievers, which bear as unfriendly an aspect upon human virtue, if the idea that was given of it in the first part of these Institutes be just. Mr. Hume, the most acute of all modern unbelievers, confounds natural and moral qualities; representing virtue to consist of any agreeable disposition or accomplishment, without distinction. Among the virtues, he particularly mentions wit, ingenuity, eloquence, quickness of conception, facility of expression, delicacy of taste, politeness, cleanliness, and even force of body. On the other hand he ex-
cludes

cludes from the rank of virtues *humility* and *self denial*, saying that they are rejected by men of sense, because they serve no manner of purpose.

Spinoza also speaks of *repentance* as a mean, unreasonable, and despicable thing. Agreeably to these maxims, Mr. Hume speaks of a certain degree of *pride* and *self valuation*, the want of which is a vice, and the opposite to which is meanness. It is possible, indeed, to explain these terms so as to vindicate Mr. Hume's assertions; but if we collect his meaning from all that he has said upon the subject, it is impossible not to conceive that he intends to stigmatise as a vice, that which is recommended in the gospel as an amiable virtue, as peculiarly pleasing in the sight of God, and what even right reason approves.

Mr. Chubb confines the whole business of criminality to acts which affect the community. He speaks of it as unworthy of God to resent any blasphemies against himself, and he treats with nearly the same indifference all injuries to private persons only. Bolingbroke also says, that all the sanctions of the law of nature affect men collectively considered, and not as individuals. So low an opinion had Mr. Chubb of the excellent and truly rational morals of our Saviour, that he scruples not to assert, that all the alteration he made in Judaism was for the worse, that those precepts by which christianity is peculiarly distinguished,

guished, are less perfect than those which prevailed before, and that they are inconsistent with the welfare and happiness of mankind.

The obligation of *sincerity* and integrity seems to have been very weak in the minds of several unbelievers. Hobbes advanced that that idolatry to which a man is compelled by the terrors of death, is not idolatry. Others have adopted the same maxim, and have even ridiculed christians for dying martyrs to the truth.

The apologies that were made for vice by the Stoics, have likewise been adopted by unbelievers of modern times. Lord Herbert says, that those persons are not lightly to be condemned who are carried to sin by their bodily constitution; and he particularly instances in lust and anger. Such persons he represents as no more to be blamed than a dropsical person for his immoderate thirst, or a lethargical person for his laziness and inactivity. He also apologizes for many vices, as not being committed out of enmity to God, but with a view to men's own particular advantage or pleasure, being chosen by them under the appearance of some good. He might not attend to it, but certainly there is no crime, for which this maxim will not furnish an apology.

The most obvious of all virtues, and those of the most acknowledged obligation, are the *social* ones. When any of the social duties are neglected,

ed, some of our fellow-creatures are injured, and cannot forbear complaining, or seeking some method of redress. Indeed, without a tolerable observance of social duties, society could not subsist. Public wrongs are always things of great notoriety, so that mankind cannot but attend to them, and be convinced of their malignant and destructive nature. Among all nations, therefore, we find a pretty just notion of the distinction between right and wrong; and the duties of society have always been the most generally practised. But even this branch of the system of morals was exceedingly imperfect among the Greeks and Romans, and was by no means favourable to the sentiments of a refined, generous, and extensive humanity, which considers all mankind as brethren, the common offspring of one great and good parent, and admonishes us to do to others as we would that they should do to us.

The Greeks, in general, do not appear to have had any higher object than the good of their respective states, or at most that of the community of Greeks. Even Socrates, when he directs his hearers to consider all Greeks as brethren, speaks of the Barbarians (by whom were meant all other nations) as their natural enemies; and he prescribes such rules of conduct with respect to them, as are not reconcileable to the common rules of humanity. It is well known to have been a maxim

at Sparta, that probity and every thing else is to be sacrificed to the good of the state. These Spartans, having conquered a neighbouring nation, the Helots, kept them for several hundred years in a state of the most abject slavery; and lest they should grow too numerous, they frequently butchered them in cold blood; and their youths were not only connived at, but applauded when they killed them by surprise, to ensure them to the bloody and deceitful business of war. For with them a victory gained by artifice was reckoned to be of double value.

In most of the heathen states we find customs utterly irreconcilable with humanity and virtue, particularly that of exposing sickly children to be devoured by wild beasts. In Sparta every child was examined by public inspectors, who determined whether it should be brought up or exposed, and for this they are commended by Plutarch. Plato, in his book of laws, orders, that when persons are past the age of having strong children, they should use means to prevent their being born alive, or kill them after they were born. Aristotle also says, that there should be laws to prevent the education of weak children. In several antient heathen nations, the aged and infirm were exposed. Among the Persians this was done without any scruple.

At

At Rome it was the general custom to leave their old and sick slaves to perish on a certain island in the Tiber; and the favourite entertainment of the Roman people, for many ages, was the barbarous exhibition of gladiators, some of whom fought with each other, and some with wild beasts. In this manner many hundreds of slaves, carefully trained up for the purpose, have been sacrificed at one time. This was one of the horrid customs which owed its abolition to the mild spirit of christianity.

One would have thought that compassion for the distressed had been so deeply rooted in the human heart, and had so much the sanction of natural conscience, that it could not have been in the power of philosophy to exclude it from a system of morals; and yet those great moralists the Stoics, absolutely proscribed it. Their *wise man* must have no passions, and consequently no sympathy. Epic-tetus, indeed, allows a philosopher to condole with his common friends *in words*, if that will afford them any relief; but he bids him be very careful that, in reality, he *feels* nothing all the time.

Some of the philosophers recommend the forgiveness of injuries, but others praise a spirit of *revenge*, particularly Democritus; and when Plato introduces Socrates as recommending forgiveness,
he

he speaks of it as contrary to the sentiments of the generality of the philosophers.

The obligation of *truth* seems to be equal, if not superior to that of humanity and compassion, on account of its obvious importance to society, and yet the maxims of some of the philosophers tended to undermine it. The Stoics thought that lying was lawful if it was profitable, and Plato says, that man may tell a lie who knows how to do it at a proper time.

Having found the Greek philosophers such loose moralists with respect to the social virtues above-mentioned, we cannot expect from them any great strictness with respect to the *commerce of the sexes*. None of the philosophers ever represented simple fornication, especially on the part of the man, as any vice at all, though its tendency is so pernicious to society, and the practice of it so much depraves the heart. Cato commended a young man for frequenting the public stews, and Cicero expressly speaks of fornication as a thing that was never found fault with.

Many of the *customs* of the Greeks and Romans, and especially their religious customs promoted a disposition to lewdness. Some of these have been already mentioned. At Sparta, young women appeared naked in the public exercises, and when married women had no children, their husbands were encouraged to lend them to other men, a custom

custom which Plutarch vindicates. This was also agreeable to the doctrine of the Stoics; and it is well known that that rigid Stoic, Cato of Utica, lent his wife to his friend Hortensius. Plato, in his book of Laws, recommends a community of women, and he advises that soldiers be not restrained with respect to any kind of sensual indulgence, even the most unnatural species of it, when they are upon an expedition.

Incestuous marriages were common in some Gentile nations, especially Egypt and Persia; but they were condemned in Greece and Rome.

Let us now see what maxims relating to the mutual intercourse of mankind have been adopted by the more celebrated of our modern unbelievers. Bayle says, that the prohibition of *revenge* is contrary to the law of reason and nature, and Tindal makes the doctrine of the *forgiveness of injuries* an objection to christianity. This writer also speaks very slightly of the obligation of *truth*.

Unbelievers in general make very light of the obligation of *chastity*, especially Tindal and Bolingbroke. This last mentioned writer does not admit that *adultery* (which, in ancient heathen states, was generally punished with death) is a violation of the law of nature, and he says that *polygamy* is founded on the law of nature. *Incest* he admits to be unnatural, but only in the highest degrees, as between fathers and daughters, sons
and

and mothers; but concerning this he does not pretend to be very positive.

If men do not feel and acknowledge the obligation of social virtue, it cannot be expected that they should think themselves under any restraint where the rights of others have no place. When the authority of God, and of the magistrate, are both out of the question, the reasons for *purity* and *decency of conduct*, derived from nature only, cannot be supposed to weigh much against the bias of inclination. To provide for a man's happiness in this life was the great object of all the philosophers of antiquity; and though some of them considered happiness as consisting in virtue only, and others in tranquillity of mind as well as of body, Aristippus, and the Alexandrian school, which was one of the last that was formed, made *corporeal pleasure* only to be the ultimate end of man.

The Stoics allowed of very great indulgence of the senses, and were generally great drinkers. Cato of Utica was remarkably addicted to this vice, so was Zeno, the founder of the sect, and Chrysippus died in consequence of drinking to excess at a sacrifice.

The maxims of the heathen philosophers with respect to the commerce of the sexes have been already mentioned, and their practice with respect to those vices which are justly stiled *unnatural* was not less exceptionable; and though it is hardly
credible,

credible, yet these vices also had too much of the sanction of some legislators and *philosophers*, and were countenanced by the example of many of them. Xenophon informs us that *sodomy* was encouraged by the public laws of several of the states of Greece. It was more especially so among the Cretans, in order to prevent their having too many children. Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece, and the celebrated lawgiver of Athens, forbade this practice to slaves, which necessarily conveys the idea of his thinking it fit for free men only. According to Cicero, the Greek philosophers not only generally practised, but even gloried in this vice; and Plutarch informs us, that many parents would not suffer their children to keep the company of those philosophers, who pretended to be fond of them. Diogenes was remarkable for indulging himself in the most abominable practices openly, and without any sense of shame, affecting, according to the maxim of the Cynics, to live according to nature. These unnatural vices were increased in a most astonishing manner about the time of the promulgation of christianity. Seneca says, that in his time they were practised openly, and without shame at Rome.

When *pleasure* was considered as the great end of living, and when the authority of God and of conscience was disclaimed, it cannot be wondered that whenever this end of life was despaired of,
life

life itself should be abandoned. We therefore naturally expect that *self-murder* should be recommended by the Epicureans, and other philosophers, whose principles were similar to theirs, when life should become a burthen; and in this we are not disappointed. But it was chiefly recommended and practised by the Stoics, who pretended to renounce pleasure, as an act of heroism and magnanimity. The usual saying of their gravest philosophers on this subject was, *If the house be smoky, the door is open, and you may walk out*; and history informs us, that many of the most eminent Stoics died by their own hands, especially the famous Cato of Utica, and Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, who killed himself when he was very old, after breaking a finger which proved to be very painful to him.

Sometimes, indeed, these philosophers talked in a different strain, and advised persons not to abandon life, till God, who placed them in it, should give the signal; but, it is in vain to expect a perfect consistency in any of the systems of the philosophers. They were perpetually charging one another, and indeed very justly, with inconsistencies, and many other absurdities. Whatever the philosophers might think, or practice, in this respect, the legislators of antiquity did not adopt the same maxims. For, in several ancient states, we find

find self-murder branded by an ignominious treatment of the body, and other penalties.

If we look into the writings of many of the modern unbelievers, we shall find them as little restrained in their pleasures while they live, and as little scrupulous with respect to abandoning life when it becomes disagreeable to them. Helvetius, in his celebrated treatise, *De l'Esprit*, represents the love of pleasure as the voice of God; and lest we should mistake his idea of pleasure, he says, that it is of two kinds only; consisting either in the gratification of the senses, or in procuring the means of gratifying them. He also says, that it is not agreeable to good policy to represent *gallantry* (under which term he includes commerce with married women) as a vice in a moral sense. Indeed the design of his whole treatise is to shew that happiness consists in sensual pleasure, and wisdom in pursuing it.

Modern unbelievers are almost universally advocates for *self-murder*, and Mr. Blount, who wrote the *Oracles of reason*, both recommended it, and practised it upon himself. The same has been the end of many other unbelievers.

Such having been the state of the heathen world, we shall see the propriety of those descriptions of it which we find in several parts of the New Testament, and which are suspected by many persons, who have not a sufficient knowledge of antient

times, to be hyperbolical and exaggerated. For though every corruption of genuine christianity has tended, as will be shewn in its proper place, to debase the spirit of it, and to defeat the great purpose of it, in reforming the world, and promoting purity of morals; the corruption was never so great, not even in the darkest ages of popery, but that the belief of it was more favourable to virtue than the belief of the prevailing doctrines of the heathens at the time of the promulgation of christianity. We often complain, and very justly, of the corruption of the times: and such complaints were never more particularly loud than in the period preceding the reformation; but the corruption was still short of that which (as we learn from the heathen writers themselves) generally prevailed in the heathen world.

Peter, speaking of the Gentiles, says that *they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*. And the apostle Paul says, *that being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, they gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to commit all iniquity with greediness*. There are also many other passages in the writings of Paul, which represent the state of the heathen world as exceedingly corrupt indeed; and it was far from being in the way of being mended by the philosophy of those times.

SECTION IV.

*Of the doctrine of a future state among the
Heathens.*

WE shall the less wonder at the imperfect state of morals, both with respect to theory and practice, in the heathen world, when we consider that they were destitute of those great sanctions of virtue, which are derived from the consideration of the authority and moral government of God, especially as extending to a life beyond the grave. We find more of the belief of a future life of retribution in the earlier ages of the heathen world; but, if we judge of it from the representation of the poets, among whom only we must look for the real opinion of the vulgar, and the maxims of the popular religion, we shall find that, about the time of the earliest Greek poets, the popular notions of a future state were such as could be of no farther use than to restrain the greater kinds of crimes, but that it could furnish no motives to aim at any high degree of purity, and real excellence of character.

According to the poets, the state of the best men after death was very melancholy, and undesirable, notwithstanding the charming descriptions which

they sometimes give of it. In Homer, Achilles in the Elysian shades tells Ulysses, who is represented as meeting him there, that he had rather be a rustic on earth, serving a poor man for hire, and having but scanty fare, than have a large empire over the dead.

Lame as these popular notions of a future state were, the Greeks and Romans had no opportunity of having their minds impressed with them, but by listening to the traditions of their parents, or the songs of their poets, or by gazing at the pageantry which was exhibited at their religious mysteries. There was no provision in any heathen country, for making these things the subject of grave discourses, delivered to the common people, by persons for whose character they had a respect.

When this subject came to be canvassed by the philosophers, who rejected the traditions on which the vulgar belief was founded, the doctrine of a future state was first doubted of, and then generally disbelieved and discarded. And considering what slender evidence there is for this doctrine on the principles of the light of nature only, it is no wonder that this should have been the consequence of reasoning upon the subject. We shall see that all things have taken the very same turn among modern unbelievers, who have rejected the authority of revelation, which is the great support of the doctrine of a future life in the present age.

All

All the heathen philosophers, not excepting Socrates himself, speak with great uncertainty concerning a future life. One of the last things he said to his friends, who attended upon him at the time of his death, was, "I am going to die, and you continue in life, but which of us shall be in a better state is known to none but God." Besides, this philosopher speaks of a future state as the privilege of those only who addict themselves to philosophy, and says that the souls of the wicked transmigrate into bodies of ignoble animals; while the better kind of men, who are not philosophers, inhabit the better kind of animals. Cicero in his philosophical treatises, in which, however, he only professes to contend for the more *probable* opinions, and does not pretend to any certainty, declares in favour of the doctrine of a future life; but in his private letters to his friends he talks in a quite contrary strain, or at least with the greatest possible uncertainty.

The Stoics did, in general, believe a future life, but it was of such a kind, as to be of little or no use in a moral respect. For they supposed that the souls of men, and of brutes also, having been originally part of the common soul of the universe, would, at length, be absorbed into it again, and consequently that all separate consciousness would be lost.

The *arguments* which are produced by the heathen philosophers in proof of a future life are exceedingly weak. That on which they seem to have laid the greatest stress was derived from the doctrine of *pre-existence*, and Cicero, in his reasoning upon this subject, asserts that the souls of men have existed from all eternity. On this notion is founded the doctrine of the Platonists, that the knowledge we acquire in this present state is only a recollection of what we had been possessed of in a former.

Had the heathen philosophers believed a future life, in the same manner as christians believe in it, they could not have failed to make the same obvious use of it, in strengthening the sanctions of virtue, and supporting them under the troubles of life, and the fear of death. But all the motives to virtue on which they lay any stress, are altogether independent of the consideration of a future life, being derived from the intrinsic excellence of virtue, and its complete sufficiency for happiness here, notwithstanding all the pains and troubles of life. Also, though we have many specimens of their *topics of consolation* to their friends in distress, and of their own soliloquies in these circumstances, we find nothing in their writings that approaches to the joyful sentiments of christians. The argument they universally have recourse to is the following: Death cannot be formidable, because it
is

is either a remove for the better, or an utter extinction of being. For it is to be observed, that the philosophers, with one voice, rejected the opinion of *future torments*; so that let a man have been ever so wicked, death, according to them, was the termination of all his sufferings.

Pythagoras, one of the oldest of the Greek philosophers, rejects the notion of future punishments as a vain terror. Plato, sometimes adopts the representations of the poets in this case, and at other times rejects them, as conveying too frightful an idea of a future state. Cicero not only disavows, but even ridicules the doctrine of future punishments, and he represents it as the opinion of all the philosophers, that the Gods are never angry, and that they are incapable of hurting any body.

It must also be observed, upon this subject, that the doctrine of *transmigration*, which was the belief of many heathen nations, conveys no idea of *punishment*, properly so called; because it was not supposed to have been attended with any consciousness of what had passed in a former state.

The antient Germans had a notion of a future state, and of certain brutal pleasures, to be enjoyed in the palace of Odin; but they had no respect to moral virtue, as they were supposed to be reserved for those who should die in battle only.

Uncertain and imperfect as were the notions of a future state among the Greeks and Romans, we find little or no remains of them about the time of the promulgation of christianity. In that learned and inquisitive age we have the most undeniable evidence that the belief of a future life was generally rejected, both by the philosophers and the vulgar. This was chiefly owing to the pretended science of those days; and the æra of the declension of the traditional opinions at Rome is well known to have been the introduction of the Greek philosophy into that city. Polybius blames the great men of his time for teaching the common people to despise the fables of the poets, representing them as *useful fictions*; and Cicero speaks of future punishments as what hardly an old woman in his time believed. Bolingbroke says, that the belief of a future state was rejected by many who made pretensions to learning and philosophy, that it was considered as doubtful and uncertain by the rest of them, and that it had been so much blended with fables, that it had but little hold even on the vulgar opinion:

It was the opinion of Bolingbroke himself, that the whole man is dissolved at death, and he certainly had no hope of a resurrection; and though he acknowledges it may be useful to mankind to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, yet he says, it is a fiction, having no real
foun-

foundation in nature and reason ; and both he and Mr. Collins, who likewise rejects this doctrine, say, but without any proof, that it was an invention of the Egyptians.

It is usual with many persons, on their first becoming unbelievers, to boast of the sufficiency of the light of nature, with respect to the knowledge of God, the rule of human duty, and the doctrine of a future state. But, if we judge from observation ; we shall be led to conclude, either that this was a mere pretence, in order to get rid of revelation, or else, that these unbelievers themselves were not sufficiently aware how much the serious belief of a future life depends upon the belief of revelation ; and consequently how much that belief would be shaken when the ground on which it had been built was removed. For after rejecting revelation for some time, they have generally given up the belief which, at first, they professed to have in the moral government of God here or hereafter and at present there are, I believe, very few unbelievers in revelation, who will pretend to have any serious expectation of a future life. In foreign countries this fact is notorious, and they are therefore generally called *Atheists* ; and, indeed, when the doctrine of a future life is abandoned, men may almost as well reject the belief of a God also.

Mr. Chubb is a remarkable instance of one who went through all the stages of free thinking and infidelity, speaking at first of a future state with certainty, then with uncertainty, and lastly, with absolute unbelief. Upon the supposition of a future life, he says, that those who die in their youth will not be called to judgment, nor those who act a low part in life. In another place he represents it as absolutely doubtful, whether the soul perishes with the body, or subsists after it; and at the same time he declares that, if the soul be perishable with the body, "there can be no place for argument
" with regard to a future state of existence to men,
" or of a future retribution; because when the
" human frame is once dissolved by death, the
" man ceases to be, and is no more."

Mr. Hume directly argues against the doctrines of a providence, and a future state of rewards and punishments. Those, says he, are vain reasoners, and invert the order of nature, who, instead of regarding this present life, and the present scene of things, as the sole object of their contemplation, render it a passage to something farther; and yet, he says, that those who attempt to disabuse men of their prejudices in favour of a future state, may, for ought he knows, be good reasoners, but he cannot allow them to be good citizens or politicians; since they free men from restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws

laws of equity and society in one respect more easy and secure.

I would observe, in this place, that the inference I draw from these observations respecting the moral maxims of unbelievers, is not, by any means, that there are no good moral characters in that class of men. As it is well known that many persons are much *worse*, so there are others, no doubt, much *better* than their principles. The conduct of men is greatly influenced by principles which they do not avow, and the operation of which they do not distinctly perceive; and also by early habits and dispositions, which act mechanically, and independently of any declared principle. But as far as avowed principles have any effect (and their effect on the minds of those who attend to them must be of *some* moment, and that continually increasing) their real operation, as well as their tendency, must be unfavourable to virtue.

Persons who have had a christian education, may continue to act, in a great measure, upon christian principles, after they become *nominal unbelievers*; especially if a virtuous and decent conduct have become habitual to them, if temptations to act otherwise be not very strong, and if they act without much reflection. But I own, that I do not see how I can have the same dependence upon a man's acting a truly virtuous and disinterested part, especially in a case where a considera-

ble risk must be run, with respect to fortune or life, whether he believe in a future state or not; especially if he have time to *reflect* on the hazard that he runs with respect to things of the most importance to him. If, however, an unbeliever should sacrifice his fortune, or his life, in a good cause, which I do not say is impossible, it would give me a very high idea of the force of good habits; and mechanical propensities in him, but a proportionably low opinion of his understanding. It would argue such a weakness of intellect, or such inattention to his known interest, as I should not presume to find in any man. In order to gain my *intire confidence*, I must see a man's reason, his *interest*, and his *passions*, all leading the same way.

But the use that I would make of the observations above-mentioned, is to shew that we are not to expect either *clearness* or *consistency* of moral principles upon the light of nature; and therefore that, as far as clearness and consistency of such principles are of importance to mankind (and no doubt they must be of great importance) they furnish an evidence of the great *expediency*, if not of the absolute *necessity* of divine revelation, without which so important an advantage was not to be expected.

Whatever we may now think of the *sufficiency of the light of nature*, some of the most intelligent of the heathen philosophers were not insensible of the
the

the darkness in which they were involved, and expressed the sense they had of the want of some divine illumination. There are several remarkable expressions of Socrates and Plato to this purpose. Socrates, speaking of the corruption of his times, said, that "there was no hope of amending men's morals, unless God should be pleased to send some other person to instruct them;" and Plato says, that "whatever is right, and as it should be, in the present evil state of the world, can only be so by the particular interposition of God." Socrates meeting Alcibiades, as he was going to a temple to pray, endeavoured to convince him that he knew not what to pray for as he ought, till God should dispel the darkness of his mind, and seems to refer to some *instructor*, whom God might send for that purpose*. To mention no more instances, one of the speakers in the celebrated dialogue of Plato, relating to the last scenes of the life of Socrates, speaking of the uncertainty in which they were, with respect to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, concludes, that it is best to follow that opinion which should appear to be the most probable, after their most diligent enquiry; unless they could have a still more sure and certain conduct, to carry them through this

* *Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed religion, p. 201, &c.*

life, such as a divine discovery of the truth would be.

The later Platonists and Pythagoreans were so far from thinking divine communications to be either needless or incredible, that after the promulgation of christianity, they themselves pretended to frequent impulses and inspirations, and had recourse to their initiations, and various magical ceremonies, in order to procure them. It was, moreover, the general opinion of the heathens, that Orpheus, and others of their antient poets, wrote by a divine afflatus.

It is also a consideration of great importance, that when the authority of the old *traditional religion* was worn out, something of the same *positive* nature was wanted to supply its place. The *reason* of mankind was by no means sufficient for this purpose. When the passions of men are strongly engaged, and a favourite gratification is in view, reason interposes with little effect; whereas a positive precept, coming from *acknowledged authority*, might have real weight. Besides men are seldom at a loss to find excuses for their favourite indulgences, and they will define *virtue* in such a manner, as to make their own vices either not criminal at all, or to be so in a very slight degree.

We have seen that, in fact, this was the case with the antients, in the most enlightened ages of the

the world; and it is remarkably the case with modern unbelievers. Nay, though the tendency of some vices, especially those which consist in the irregular indulgence of the senses, is, no doubt, highly injurious, debasing the very souls of men, and laying a foundation for great evils and distresses, both to individuals and society, and this at no great distance; yet the minds of men are so blinded and infatuated by these vices, that though they may think and act justly in other respects, they cannot, or will not see those consequences, but persist in making plausible apologies for the most flagitious conduct. How desirable then is it, that the wise parent of the human race should interpose, and, by his express authority, forbid those practices, which he sees to be ultimately injurious to us.

If we attend but for a moment to the sentiments and conduct of mankind, we shall be convinced that *the ten commandments*, the plain rules of conduct laid down by our Saviour, and the authoritative denunciations of the apostles, are of infinitely more service to the cause of virtue, than all that men uninspired of God could ever say, or write upon the subject.

What is the great guardian of sobriety and chastity among us? Certainly not reason, or philosophy, which has generally made very light of
the

the sanctions of those virtues, but such commands as these, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, Ex. xx. 14. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, &c. &c.

A reverence for God is not preserved upon the minds of men by the ideas they naturally have of the awful sanctity of every thing belonging to that great being, who is the maker, preserver, and judge of all, but by such precepts as these, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, Ex. xx. 7; the express commands of Christ, *I say unto you swear not at all*; and the advice of the apostle James, *Above all things, my brethren, swear not*.

Even our lives and properties are, in many cases, more effectually secured by the precepts, *Thou shalt not commit murder, Thou shalt not steal*, and the solemn declaration of the apostle, *Neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, than by any sense that men, inflamed by avarice, or revenge, can be supposed to have of the *value of life*, and the *natural right* which every man has to it, and to his goods lawfully acquired.

If

If these observations be just, and I doubt not but that the recital of them will impress upon the minds of all persons, who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature and of the world, a conviction of their truth, divine revelation must have been a matter of great importance, if it had been nothing more than the interposition of a *competent authority*, in favour of those rules of conduct which right reason might have investigated, but which reason, in a variety of circumstances, might also have *evaded*; and it ought ever to be considered, that, in proportion to the real value, usefulness, and consequently desirableness of positive or revealed religion, is its *antecedent credibility*.

Upon the whole, such was the actual state of the heathen world, that it cannot surely be doubted, but that divine revelation was highly *expedient*, and even *necessary*, for the restoration of virtue and happiness.

Without pretty just notions of God, and his moral government; without a satisfactory knowledge of our duty and future expectations, we should have been little better than brute animals. At least, a man destitute of this knowledge must be incapable of these *exalted sentiments*, and that *dignity of conduct*, which render him an unspeakably greater and happier being. And, since we are naturally capable of these improvements, nothing
but

but a sufficient degree of *knowledge* being requisite to the attainment of them; the noblest end of human nature seems to be defeated in a state of gross ignorance. It is like fixing a plant in a soil where it cannot find its proper nourishment, and for want of which it can never flourish, so as to be what it was capable of being.

For, admitting that it may not be absolutely impossible for the divine being to suffer an entire race of rational creatures, and the most conspicuous inhabitants of such a world as this, to become wholly degenerate and depraved, so as never to answer the important purposes for which they seem to have been made, there certainly can be no impropriety in his interposing to check that depravity, by communicating to them that knowledge, which alone is wanting to effect so great and benevolent a purpose.

Now let us form what idea we please of the *natural powers* of the human mind, it is hardly possible not to be satisfied, from a just view of the state of morals in the heathen world, that it was *morally impossible* they should ever have recovered even that degree of useful religious knowledge, of which they seem to have been formerly possessed, and much less that they would ever have made any important additions to their original stock. In such a state of things, the expectation of some divine

vine, interposition must, *a priori*, have been even reasonable, on account of its being so exceedingly seasonable, and advantageous. We may almost say, that *it became* the great and good parent of the human race to afford his creatures and offspring that assistance, which, in their situation, they so much wanted, and which they were not capable of procuring for themselves.



CHAPTER II.

OBSERVATIONS PREVIOUS TO THE EXAMINATION
OF THE PROPER EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

SECTION I.

Of the nature and use of miracles.

SOME may think it not suitable to the wisdom of God, to leave his creatures in need of occasional assistance. A being of infinite wisdom, they say, would make his works so perfect at first, as never to want it. But the only reason why it is wise in men to aim at this is, because they cannot always be present with their works, or because it would be troublesome to attend to them. Also, their being present, or not present with their works, is of no consequence to their operation. Whereas God is already every where present, and as he constantly supports all the laws of nature, the changing the course of it implies no additional attention or trouble.

Besides, it is of the utmost importance to the great ends of the rational creation, that the Almighty maker should be *considered* as present with
his

his works. For any thing that we know, therefore, the best of all schemes may be that in which the divine agency and interposition are never wholly superseded; and though, as was shewn before, it be wise, and even necessary to establish *general laws*, yet occasional deviations from them may contribute more to promote the same great end than a perfect uniformity.

With respect to *men*, and perhaps all other moral agents, there seems to be an evident propriety in the divine being exciting their attention to his presence and government by occasional *departures* from the laws of nature; for by this means we more easily preserve a just sense of our connection with, and dependence upon God. Whenever any appearances become quite *uniform*, and *constant*, they cease to strike; inasmuch, that it is very possible even for nations of mankind, who have never been taught any thing concerning God, to pass their whole lives, in the view of all the wonders of creation, without ever raising their thoughts to the great author of all. Whereas, if the usual connection of causes and effects be interrupted, and things happen contrary to their fullest expectations, founded upon long experience, their attention is immediately roused, and they cannot be satisfied till they understand both the efficient and final cause of so strange an appearance, that is, without knowing both what produced it, and for
what

what reason it was produced. And a little reflection must satisfy them, that he only who ordained and established the course of nature, can alter it.

Whenever, therefore, the course of nature is interrupted, by the performance of a real miracle, men may be sure that the immediate finger of God is in it; and, therefore, that their attention ought to be excited to it.

Strictly speaking, indeed, it is improper to say that the laws of nature are violated in working of miracles, because they are no more than the effect of an adequate power in nature, exerted at proper seasons. It may be compared to a man's relieving a fly, or any small insect struggling with difficulties insurmountable by itself. But this view of miracles by no means affords any objection to the use of them that is here contended for, since whatever demonstrates the interposition of a power *superior to human*, must be referred to the operation of God mediately or immediately, nor is it possible that any system of religion should have a stronger sanction than such works as these.

Some, indeed, have advanced, that there is no natural or necessary connection between *miracles* and *doctrines*. But though this might have been urged very seriously by the antient Jews or Pagans, who believed in magic, we need not scruple to say that, in this age, it must be most egregious trifling, and that it does not deserve any reply. At least
it

it will be time enough to consider this objection, when some person shall be produced, who shall seriously say, that he believes the miracles, but not the doctrines. Spinoza himself, as Mr. Bayle assures us, said to his friends, that “ if he could
“ be convinced of the resurrection of Lazarus, he
“ would break his whole system in pieces, and
“ readily embrace the common faith of christians.”

It may also be alledged as an argument for the use of miracles, that the more general is the corruption of religion, and consequently the more necessary revelation is, the less capable men are of perceiving the *internal* proofs of the excellence of a divine religion, and therefore the more occasion they have for *external* proofs, such as miracles afford. -

It is possible that there may be intelligent beings, superior, and invisible to us, and, their powers far exceeding ours, they may exert them in such a manner, as that to us the appearance will be the same as of a divine interposition. But such an abuse of superior powers would be so fatal, that it cannot be supposed that a wise and good being would permit it. Indeed, if this were the case, the divine being would leave himself no certain method of making his own power and designs known to his creatures, whatever occasion there might be for his interposition ; as it would not be in their power to guard themselves from artful and

malicious

malicious beings, who might take pleasure in misleading and confounding them. If ever, therefore, such beings be permitted to work miracles, we may depend upon it that they will be so circumstanced, that it will be in the power of men of virtue and good understanding to discover the cheat.

Upon the whole, however, it is not in the least degree probable, that any being, besides the supreme, ever worked a real miracle; and, consequently, that all the wonders in which God himself has not been concerned have been the effects of *artifice* and *deceit*, so as to impose upon none but the ignorant and the credulous; and that men of understanding, who have opportunity of making proper inquiries, may see through and detect them.

SECTION II.

Of the nature of the evidence for revelation.

NATURAL religion being that knowledge of God, of our duty, and future expectations, which we acquire from our observations on the usual course of nature, *revealed religion* may be defined to be the knowledge, relating to the same subjects, which we acquire from *interruptions* of the usual course of nature, by the interposition of the God of nature, the sole controller of the laws which

which he himself has established. Now the proper evidence that there has been any such interruption in the usual course of nature, or that any real miracles have been performed, must be the *testimony* of those who had an opportunity of examining the facts, in the same manner as, by our own observation, and that of others together, we acquire a knowledge of the laws of nature themselves.

In some respects, however, the evidence of revelation borrows aid from other considerations, independent of human testimony, so as to be perfectly similar to the evidence for natural religion. The proper evidence for natural religion arises from *present appearances*, the doctrines of it being nothing more than the conclusions we draw from them. Could we possibly account for every thing that we see in the world around us without the supposition of an uncaused being, there would have been no foundation for natural religion; but not being able to account for what we see without supposing the existence and agency of a supreme being; we are under a necessity of admitting that there is such a being, and consequently of assenting to every other article of natural religion.

In like manner a variety of *present appearances* may be considered as so many standing evidences of several leading articles in revealed religion; because, unless we admit that the divine being has interposed in the government of the world, in

such a manner as the histories of the Jewish and christian revelations assert, it is impossible to give a satisfactory account of the known state of the world in past and present times; as, for instance, that such a system as Judaism should have been established, and such a religion as christianity should have had that spread in the world, which all history shews that it had, in such circumstances as the same history informs us both the professors of that religion, and the world in general, then were.

In fact, the evidence from testimony itself is ultimately the same with this, being reduceable to the method of judging from known and even present appearances. For the reason why we are influenced by it, and act upon it, in any particular case, is that, from our knowledge of human nature, we have found that, so circumstanced, it never has deceived us; so that human nature must be changed before such testimony could be fallacious. For the same reason, all historical evidence is ultimately an appeal to present appearances. For if things in time past had not been as they represent, the information we now receive concerning them, could not have been conveyed to us.

The argument from *prophecy* is of a mixed nature, resting, in general, upon the testimony of the friends of revelation, that such prophecies were actually delivered a sufficient time before the event,
and

and upon the testimony of general history, and the present state of things, for the accomplishment of them. Many of the scripture prophecies, however, even in the Old Testament, and almost all those of the New, are universally acknowledged to have been published prior to the events to which they correspond.

These three kinds of evidence for the Jewish and christian revelations, viz. from *testimony*, from *present appearances*, and from *prophecy*, I shall consider in the order in which they are here mentioned.

SECTION III.

Of the importance of testimony, and the credibility of miracles.

SINCE one principal evidence of revelation depends upon *human testimony*, I shall first consider the importance of it, and then lay down some general rules for estimating the value of it.

The greatest part of our knowledge has no other foundation than testimony; and even when the proper foundation is of a different kind, our faith is much strengthened by means of it. For instance, when we ourselves form any rational conclusion from appearances, as that there is a God, we are much confirmed in our belief, by finding

that many other persons have drawn the same conclusion, either from the same appearances, or from any other.

Besides, the knowledge on which we act every day depends chiefly upon *memory*, or our recollecting and believing that we once saw the evidence of the truths which may not now be obvious to us. For no person can pretend to be able at all times clearly to demonstrate every proposition to which he gives his firmest assent. Now belief, which depends upon *recollection*, is somewhat similar to that which depends upon *testimony*. In one case we believe that we *ourselves* have seen a thing to be what we now apprehend it to be, and in the other case we believe that *other persons* have seen it to be so.

We ought not, therefore, to think lightly of the nature of faith in revelation, because it is an *historical faith*, and depends upon *human testimony*; for the same is the foundation of the greatest, and most valuable part of human knowledge.

If we appeal to *experience*, to determine the *actual weight* and effect of different kinds of evidence, we shall be convinced that the evidence of testimony is adapted to give as much satisfaction to the mind of man as any other kind of evidence. No person, I believe, who has read history, has any more doubt of there being such a city as Rome, of there having been such a person as Julius Cæsar, or of his having been killed there, than he
has

has of the truth of the proposition that 2 and 2 make 4. At least, if there be any difference in the *fullness of persuasion* in these two cases, it is altogether imperceptible; and any person would, in fact, venture as much upon the truth of the one, as upon that of the other.

Though it be true, indeed, in theory, that there is some small degree of uncertainty in every single testimony, which can never be wholly removed by any subsequent testimony (since this, also, must be liable to the same kind of uncertainty) yet there is also a degree of uncertainty, and a source of mistake, in drawing conclusions from self-evident truths, and especially when the chain of deduction is of considerable length.

Considering the great weight which testimony naturally has with mankind, we cannot but conclude that any thing may be proved by it, except such things as are contradicted by superior evidence, and such is, certainly, that of our own senses, comprehending not only our immediate perceptions, but even necessary conclusions from those perceptions. How incredible, therefore, soever, any fact may be *a priori*, since, if it be not absolutely impossible, it *may* be true, so also a certain degree of historical evidence must be sufficient to prove the truth of it.

We judge of other persons, and of the connection between their sentiments, language and con-

duct, by ourselves; and knowing, by our own consciousness, that a *regard to truth* is a natural, and very strong principle in the human mind, we take it for granted that the solemn declarations of others are founded in truth; and the general experience of *human veracity* confirms our disposition to give credit to human testimony, unless we can discover some reason for supposing that those who give us any information were either deceived themselves, or were much interested in deceiving others.

Mr. Hume, indeed, has advanced, that we ought not to listen to any evidence in favour of *miracles*, or of there ever having been a departure from the laws of nature, because every such evidence is contradicted by our own constant experience, of the absolute uniformity of the laws of nature.

But, with respect to past facts, this is taking for granted the very thing to be proved, because it is asserted by the friends of revelation, that the course of nature has not always proceeded without interruption, but that, for great and good purposes, the divine author of it has not confined himself to it, but has occasionally departed from it. In reality, therefore, all that Mr. Hume has advanced, with respect to this case, is that there have been no miraculous events because there have been none. At least, it is judging from the experience of one age, against the express testimony of former
former

former ages, and in a case in which there is no contradiction between them; since both may be equally true. For the course of nature may be perfectly uniform now, and yet may not have been so, in all cases, formerly.

But let us suppose that we lived in the age in which the first miracle was said to be performed, and that there was no pretended evidence of any thing like it having happened before. In this case our constant experience of any course of events can only be a foundation for a *reasonable, or a certain degree of, expectation*, that the same course will be continued, and by no means amounts to any thing like a demonstration that the same course will always be continued. The usual operations of nature, we have seen, are only different modes of the divine agency; but though the divine being has thought proper to act in a perfectly uniform manner, during any given period of time, it cannot follow from thence, that there never can be a reason for his changing that mode of operation; unless our reasoning concerning him and his agency be quite different from our reasoning concerning other intelligent beings and their agency; and in this case there can be no foundation for such a difference.

Besides, if there be a God, and if the world, in its present state, have not been eternal, there must have been a time when the divine being did pro-

perly *interpose*, so as to form both it, and the plants and animals which are peculiar to it; and if there *has been* but one proper interposition in any period of time past, there *may*, according to Mr. Hume's own method of reasoning, be another.

It would also follow from Mr. Hume's principles, that every *new fact* in philosophy must be absolutely incredible, till we can see how it arises from principles, the operation of which we have seen in other cases; and so the king of Siam will be justified in giving no credit to the Dutchmen, who informed him that, in their country, water became sometimes so hard, that it would even bear men and carriages; for, living in an uniformly warm climate, he had never seen any such thing, and could not conceive that it was possible.

The evidence that the course of nature has been departed from, is the very same with that by which we judge when it is not departed from, and must be equally competent in both cases. For certainly the eyes, ears, and other senses of men, are equally capable of judging concerning all things which they are equally capable of perceiving. If a number of persons could distinguish their friend from all other men before he died, they must, being possessed of the same organs, be equally capable of distinguishing him from all other persons after he should be risen from the dead. And whatever Mr. Hume, or any other person, may pretend concern-
ing

ing the *natural incredibility* of all accounts of miracles, I doubt not but that such testimony as this would have its weight even with themselves.

Nothing can be naturally more improbable than the case I have mentioned, viz. of a person rising from the dead; and yet I do not believe that any person can be so incredulous, but that, if only half a dozen persons, of his own previous nomination, should seriously report, that, having perfectly known a person who was said to be risen from the dead, and having conversed with, and examined him, they were satisfied he was no impostor, but the very same person with whom they had been acquainted before, he would believe them; so that his own real feelings would be such a demonstration of the *actual power of testimony*, as none of his sophistry could evade. Now it will be shewn, that the evidence of the resurrection of Christ is even much more satisfactory than this; the witnesses of it being, in reality, more unexceptionable, than such as any person would have previously nominated for the purpose.

It is readily acknowledged, that many propositions are, in their own nature, absurd, and therefore that no evidence whatever can be of any avail to the proof of them. If, for instance, a person should do what I should not be able to distinguish from a real miracle, pretending to prove by it that the sun did not rise yesterday, to contradict such

a notorious historical fact as there is such a place as Rome, or to refute so plain a proposition as this, that 2 and 2 make 4, he will not persuade me to admit any thing so contrary to experience, to common sense, or to unquestionable human testimony.

Also, the great outlines of natural religion, respecting the providence, and goodness of God, and the great rules of human duty, though they be not, strictly speaking, demonstrable, yet their very high degree of probability, and their great importance to mankind, give them such a sanction, that we ought not to listen to any evidence that would tend to undermine them. We may take it for granted that God cannot contradict himself. Whatever, therefore, he clearly appears to be in his works, we may assure ourselves that he will also appear to be in any revelation that he shall please to make of himself. He cannot appear good and merciful in one method of making himself known, and cruel and unjust in another. Nothing, therefore, can be admitted as contained in any revelation, that is pretended to come from God, which is contrary to the plain principles of natural religion already demonstrated.

Since, however, there appear to be many *difficulties* on the subject of natural religion, and many of our conclusions have only a small degree of probability in their favour, we must by no means take
it

it for granted that such conclusions are always just, but must expect that a revelation from God will discover many mistakes, and especially that it will supply many defects, in the best formed system of natural religion.

From the observations which have now been made, it may be seen, that we ought to be very far from relinquishing our reason, when we come to consider the subject of revelation. On the contrary, then, it is that we ought to make the most use of it, to see that we be not imposed upon in a matter of so much consequence to us. It is only by the help of that faculty which we call *reason*, that we can distinguish between any two systems of religion that may be proposed to us. It is by reason only that we can judge both of their previous probability, and also of the positive evidence that is produced in favour of them. Let us, therefore, upon all occasions, call to our aid that power which God has given us to be the guide of life, and especially in matters of so great importance to us as those certainly are which relate to the will of God, what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him.

SECTION IV.

Rules for estimating the value of human testimony.

THE plain rules for estimating the value of *single evidences* are the two following. Any thing, capable of being proved by mere testimony, is credible in proportion to the opportunity the witness had of being well informed concerning it himself, and his freedom from any bias that might make him wish to impose upon others. If the person who gives us information concerning any transaction, at which we ourselves were not present, appears to be a competent judge of it, and have been in a situation in which he had the best opportunity of being rightly informed, and if there be no appearance of its being his interest to deceive us, we give our assent; but we hesitate, in proportion to the doubts we entertain on either of these heads.

The *more* persons there are who relate the same transaction, of which they are equally credible witnesses; the stronger is the evidence for it. But the more persons there are through whose hands the *same narration* is conveyed to us, the weaker is the evidence. In this latter case, the witnesses are called *dependent* ones; but in the former they are said to
be

be *independent*. Whatever imperfection there may be in any one of a number of independent witnesses, it is in part removed by the testimony of others; but every imperfection in the original evidence is increased in proportion to the number of dependent witnesses, through whose hands the same story is transmitted.

The marks of a story being related by a number of independent witnesses, of full credit, is their agreement in the principal articles, and their disagreement with respect to things of less consequence, or at least a variety, or diversity in their manner of relating the same story.

The reason of this is, that to things of principal importance they will all equally *attend*, and therefore they will have their minds equally impressed with the ideas of them; but that to things of less consequence they will not give the same attention, and therefore they will be apt to conceive differently concerning them.

If a number of persons agree very minutely with respect to all the facts of any narrative, general and particular, and also in the order and manner of the narration, it will amount to a proof that they have agreed together to tell the same story; and in this they will be supposed to have been influenced by some motive not favourable to the value of their testimony; and besides, having learned circumstances one of another, they cannot

not be considered as independent of one another. All histories which have been written by different persons, in all respects equally credible, agree in the main things, but they are as certainly found to differ with respect to things of less consequence.

We likewise distinguish with respect to the *nature of the fact* to which our assent is required, for we expect more numerous, more express, and in all respects, more unexceptionable evidence, according to the degree of its previous improbability, arising from its want of analogy to other facts already known; and in this there is a *gradation*, from things which are antecedently highly probable, and therefore require but little positive evidence, to things which are utterly incredible, being so contrary to what we already know of the course of nature, and the author of it, that no evidence could convince us of it.

If my servant should tell me that, as he was passing through a certain place, he saw a friend of mine, who I knew had business in that neighbourhood, and the character of my servant was such that I had never known him to tell me a wanton lie, I should readily believe him; and if I had any thing to do in the case, I should, without hesitation, act upon the supposition that what he told me was true. But if the same servant should say that, coming through the same place, he saw another of my friends whom I knew to have been
dead

dead, I should not believe him, though the thing in itself was not naturally impossible; and if ten or a dozen persons of our common acquaintance, persons of knowledge and curiosity, should, independently of one another, seriously inform me that they were present themselves, and had no doubt of the fact, I might believe it.

It follows, however, from this observation, that miracles require a much stronger testimony than common facts. The latter are analogous to such other facts as are the subject of every day's experience, so that we are continually expecting such things, and they are never any surprize to us; whereas the former are contrary to that analogy, and are therefore unexpected.

By the help of these maxims I shall now proceed to examine the evidence of the Jewish and christian revelations, shewing how far they are in themselves credible or incredible upon the whole; then examining the evidence which has been produced in their favour, and lastly considering some particular objections which have been made to them.

SECTION V.

Of the antecedent credibility of the Jewish and Christian revelations.

THE belief of the Jewish and christian revelations, which have so close a connection that they must stand or fall together, is to believe that the divine being has, from time to time, interposed in the moral government of the world; having, upon several important occasions, spoken to mankind by persons called *prophets*, in order to give them information concerning various truths, of the greatest moment to them, and to reclaim them from vice and wickedness; and that many persons have wrought incontestible miracles in proof of their having received a commission from God for this purpose.

In the history of the Jewish religion we are informed, that the divine being made choice of one particular nation, the posterity of Abraham, by Isaac and Jacob, as the principal medium of his communications to mankind; making especial provision against their falling into idolatry, and making their temporal prosperity manifestly to depend upon their adherence to his worship.

In

In the history of the christian religion, we are informed that, after many predictions, which did, in fact, raise the expectation of the Jewish people, and, in some measure, also, that of the rest of mankind, concerning a very extraordinary person, who should be in a more eminent manner distinguished by God, for the benefit of men, *Jesus Christ* (whose character and history strictly corresponded to those prophetic descriptions) was born in Judea; that he received from God a power of working miracles, in a more illustrious manner than any other prophet who had gone before him; that he inculcated the great duties of natural religion in their full extent, with the express promise of a resurrection from the dead, and an everlasting life of happiness, to all who should believe and obey his doctrine; and that, after living an irreproachable and most useful life (being a perfect pattern of the most genuine piety and benevolence, and of a proper moderation without austerity, with respect to all the things of this life) he was put to death by the Jews and Romans; but that he rose again from the dead on the third day, as he himself had foretold that he should; and that he ascended to heaven in a visible manner.

We are also informed in the same history, that after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, persons appointed by him, with the title of *apostles*, and many others of his disciples, had the power

of working miracles in his name ; that, at the risk of every thing that was valuable to them in this life, and of life itself, they preached the gospel ; publishing in all places the history of Jesus Christ (the same that is contained in the books called gospels) as what they could attest upon their own knowledge ; particularly reciting his doctrines, precepts, and promises ; and assuring all men, that he would come again, with a commission from God to judge the whole race of mankind, according to their works ; when he would most amply reward all the virtuous and good, especially those who had been sufferers in the cause of righteousness and truth, and that he would inflict an adequate punishment on all the wicked.

Lastly, if these histories be true, a very great number both of Jews and Gentiles were, in consequence of this preaching of the gospel, converted to the belief of christianity, many of them suffered long and severe persecutions on this account, and even courageously died martyrs to their faith, and christianity kept continually gaining ground in the world as Jesus Christ had foretold.

This is a general idea of what is contained in the Jewish and christian revelations, all the particulars being found in the *bible*, which is a collection of such books as contain the most authentic account of those revelations ; being written, as is pretended by men who themselves had received communications

tions from God, and who were witnesses of the most important of those transactions of which they give an account.

Now, before we examine the evidence on which our belief of the particulars which I have now recited rests, it is proper to consider how far the account is in itself *credible*; by which I now mean, whether it be capable of being proved at all; and, if it be, what kind of evidence is necessary to procure to it the assent of reasonable and thinking men.

That such a revelation, and miracles in proof of it, are *possible*, cannot, I think, be disputed, since the same being who made the world, must necessarily have it in his power to interpose in the government of it; and not only to reverse the laws of it, but even to destroy it, if he should think proper. The only question, therefore, is whether there could be a *sufficient reason* for such an interposition as has been described. But since *goodness* has been shewn to be the characteristic of the divine being, such a revelation must, *a priori*, appear credible, in proportion to its being useful and reasonable. If the state of things before revelation was such as made it highly expedient, at that particular juncture, in exact proportion to that *expediency*, it might even have been expected; and it would have been expected with absolute certainty,

tainty, by any being who was a proper judge of the real value and seasonableness of it.

Now that such a revelation was in fact highly expedient, has been sufficiently shewn already, in the view which has been given of the state of the heathen world antecedent to it; for without it mankind were actually involved in the grossest ignorance concerning their maker, and also concerning many important moral duties, and the sanctions of virtue in a future life; and, in consequence of this, they were abandoning themselves more and more to the most destructive vices.

That God should suffer his offspring of mankind to fall into so deplorable a situation, is only one branch of the complaint concerning the introduction and prevalence of *evils* in general; and so long as goodness appears, upon the whole, to be the governing principle of the divine being, they should lead us to look for, and expect with confidence, a remedy for these and all other evils; and we may assure ourselves, that such a remedy will be provided, as soon as ever these evils shall have answered the benevolent intention of him who has appointed, or permitted them.

So far, therefore, was such a revelation as I have been describing from being incredible, *a priori*; that, since it has been proved to have been highly *desirable*, those of mankind who had a just idea of
their

their situation, and of the character of the supreme being, might have been led to expect, or at least to wish for some extraordinary interposition, to save a sinking world, to restore the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and to provide more effectual sanctions of virtue.



CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN
RELIGIONS, DERIVED FROM TESTIMONY,
AND ESPECIALLY THAT OF ITS FRIENDS.

SECTION I.

Of the authenticity of the books of scripture.

SUCH revelations as the Jewish and christian being highly probable, or not unlikely to be true, what we have to do, in order to ascertain their *proper credibility*, is to consider whether the accounts of miracles, said to have been wrought in attestation of them, may be depended upon. In other words, we are to enquire whether the books, which we usually call the *scriptures*, contain a faithful history of facts. For, if what we there read be true, the divine being has unquestionably interposed in the government of the world, and many persons, in proof of it, have worked the most undeniable miracles; having performed such things as no men could have done, except they had been authorised and empowered by him who appointed
the

the laws of nature, and who alone can suspend or control them.

Now it may be shewn that, according to all the rules of judging concerning the value of testimony, we must admit the truth of these histories, if the books themselves be *genuine*, that is, if they were written by the persons whose names they bear, or in the circumstances in which the contents of them represent them to have been written; if, for instance, the books of Moses were written by Moses; or, which is the same thing with respect to their credibility, if they were written by any person who copied from, or digested what he had written, though they might add some circumstances of later date; or indeed if the chief of their contents were written by any person who was contemporary with Moses. The book of Joshua will also be genuine, if it was either written by Joshua himself, by any of his contemporaries, or by any person who lived within a sufficient time after his death, so as not to be unacquainted with the transactions of which he gives an account. The same observation may be made concerning all the remaining books of the Old Testament, and likewise those of the New; because such persons as the apostles, or their contemporaries, were (as will be shewn at large) in circumstances, in which they could not possibly have been imposed upon themselves, and also in which, we cannot reasonably suppose, they could be under
the

the influence of any sufficient motive to attempt to impose upon others.

Now, that the books of scripture are genuine, we have, in all respects, the same reason to believe as we have to receive any other antient writings as genuine; as that the books of Homer, for instance, were written by Homer, those of Thucydides by Thucydides, those of Tacitus by Tacitus, or any other of the most celebrated antient writings, by their reputed authors, or their cotemporaries. In all these cases, the proof is simply this, that such writings have been quoted and referred to, as the works of their reputed authors, or their cotemporaries, by subsequent writers, without any considerable variation, to the present time. Nay, we have much stronger evidence for the authenticity of the most important of the books of scripture, than we have for that of any other writings in the world; because they are much oftener quoted, and referred to, in every age, from the very times in which they were written, quite down to the present; which has been owing to nothing but the very great credit they have gained, in consequence of their being considered as of the greatest importance to mankind.

Indeed, so convincing has been the evidence of the authenticity of the books of scripture, that it had been almost universally allowed, by those who have hated and opposed the system of religion which
they

they contain. Neither the Jews, for instance, nor any early writer among the heathens, who undertook to controvert the principles of christianity, ever intimated that they had so much as a doubt concerning the genuineness of the books which contain an account of it. The *four gospels* are particularly mentioned by Julian, and a very considerable part of the contents of them are quoted by Celsus. Accordingly, these, and other early opposers of christianity, admit the truth of the history in general, without excepting what is miraculous in it; ascribing these wonderful works either to the agency of some evil spirit, or endeavouring to account for them in some other manner, in which the interposition of the divine being in favour of Christ and the apostles, might not be necessary.

It affords an argument exceedingly favourable to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, that they were very soon translated into various foreign languages, and that a multiplicity of copies, both of the originals, and of these translations, were likewise presently dispersed into all parts of the known world, which at that time abounded with men of reading and curiosity; and that all our present copies, both of the originals and of these translations, agree with one another, and with the quotations made by antient writers from them, in every thing material. We have, therefore, all the reason in the world to conclude, that

these books have not been materially corrupted, notwithstanding the *various readings*, and other errors of small consequence, by which all antient writings have suffered in the same proportion; and which were, indeed, unavoidable, unless every particular transcriber had been prevented, by a miracle from making any mistake, which was by no means necessary for any valuable purpose.

It is only upon the *leading facts* in the gospel history that the truth of christianity is founded; so that if the books of the New Testament come to us in such a state, as to contain a sufficiently credible account of the miracles which Christ wrought, of the doctrines he taught, of his death and resurrection from the dead, and also of the miracles and preaching of the apostles, and the manner in which their doctrine was received by the Jews and Gentiles, at the first promulgation of it, they are quite sufficient to induce us to live and die as becomes christians, having a full assurance of a future judgment, and of a state of retribution after death. And no corruption of the books of scripture, designed or undesigned, can be supposed to have vitiated them so much, as not to have left them even far more perfect than this great purpose and use of them requires.

It is also to be observed, that the controversies in which christians began to be engaged, even before the publication of the books of the New Testament,
and

and especially about that time, and from thence to the present day, are of great moment to establish their authenticity; since the writers in all those controversies constantly appealed to, and expressly quoted the books of scripture; and in all the writings which are come down to us, we find the texts they quoted, in every thing material, the same as in our present copies, so that we may depend upon it, that the principal books of the New Testament are the genuine productions of the persons, and of the age to which they are usually ascribed. And from this it will be made to appear that they supply a sufficient evidence of the facts on which the christian history is founded.

The particular testimonies of antient writers, Christian, Jewish, and Heathen, which demonstrate the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, have been produced at full length by Dr. Lardner; and, as it would be too tedious to recite such particulars in this place, I must refer my readers to his most valuable work, intitled, *The Credibility of the gospel history*. They may assure themselves, however, that, notwithstanding the authenticity of some of the books has been questioned, there never was any doubt with respect to any of them, except to the epistles of James and Jude, the second of Peter, the two small epistles of John, that which is inscribed to the Hebrews, and the book of Revelation. The authority of the four gospels, the

book of Acts, and the rest of the epistles, was never called in question. It is true, indeed, that some of the Judaizing christians having conceived an aversion to St. Paul, had no opinion of his writings, but they were never denied to be his. Also some of the early christians rejected the genealogy of Christ, and the history of the miraculous conception, as related in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, but they do not appear to have been numerous, nor was their opinion of long continuance.

Besides, we are by no means to infer that, because some early christians rejected any particular *opinion or fact* contained in any of the four Evangelists, they did not therefore think them to be the genuine writings of the persons whose names they bear. For though they were satisfied that they wrote those things, they might think them to be *so far* mistaken. We find, in the history of the Acts, that the opinion of a single apostle did not always pass uncontroverted; and with respect to any thing except the leading facts, such as were mentioned above, and which have never yet been questioned by any persons who call themselves christians, any difference of opinion among the apostles, or others, is of no moment whatever, with respect to the proper evidence of christianity.

With respect, however to all those books of the New Testament, the authenticity of which has been questioned, the arguments in favour of them
are

are considerably stronger than those against them. It is not certain who was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, but if it was not written by St. Paul, which seems to be the more probable opinion, yet it was certainly written in the apostolical age, and by some person of authority in the christian church. The gospel of Matthew, was, perhaps, written in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jewish converts; but either Matthew himself, or some other person of the same age, must have translated it into Greek, the language in which we now have it; so that, with respect to every thing of importance, it is of the same value as the original Hebrew would have been. The book of *Revelation* was not received in all christian churches for some time; but afterwards it gained universal credit, and its authority is now justly considered as of the highest rank. The reasons for which it was disregarded by some are, indeed, sufficiently obvious, and appear to be of no manner of weight, as they arose chiefly from the doctrine of the *millenium*, of which some antient heretics were thought to avail themselves too much.

There can be no doubt but that the canon of the Old Testament was the same in the time of our Saviour as it is now; nor could it have been corrupted materially after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, on account of the sect of the Samaritans, which took its rise about that time.

For these people professed the same regard to the sacred books with the Jews themselves, and were always at variance with them about the interpretation of the scriptures. The Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch is now in our hands, and excepting some *numbers*, in which the different copies and translations of all antient writings are peculiarly subject to vary, and a single text, in which mount *Gerizim* and mount *Ebal* are interchanged, it is the very same with the Jewish copy. Not long after this, the books of the Old Testament, beginning with the Pentateuch, were translated into Greek, and dispersed by means of the Jews, into almost every part of the known world.

There is not the least probability that any change, worth any men's attempting to make, or in the least affecting any principal point of the Jewish religion, was made during their captivity; which, however, was not long, reckoning from the time of the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, but that many of those who returned from it had a perfect remembrance of the temple of Solomon, which had been burned in the siege by Nebuchadnezzar; for they wept when they saw how much the new temple was inferior to it; and can it be supposed but that some of these people would have taken the alarm, and a schism have been occasioned, if any material change had been attempted to be made in
the

the constitution of the law, or the contents of the sacred books.

Least of all, can it be supposed that Ezra would, at that particular time, have introduced the injunction on which he laid so much stress, about putting away all their strange wives. In his circumstances this measure must have appeared exceedingly hazardous, considering how many persons, even among the priests themselves, had contracted such marriages, how considerable they were by their birth and alliances, and consequently how many enemies the Jews would thereby make themselves. We find, in fact, that this measure did meet with the most violent opposition, produced a lasting division among themselves, and made them incur the hatred and ill offices of all their neighbours. Besides, since many of the priests, who must have known as much of the law of Moses as Ezra himself, were highly exasperated at this proceeding, they would never have suffered him to publish that as one of the laws of Moses, which they knew to be a mere forgery.

If we go farther back into the Jewish history, we shall still be unable to pitch upon any time in which any material change in the sacred books could have been attempted, with the least prospect of success. It was one of the most earnest instructions of Moses himself, that the book of the law, a copy of which was lodged in the ark, should be the

subject of constant reading and meditation in every Israelitish family; and it was expressly appointed that it should be read publicly every seven years, at the feast of Tabernacles, Deut. xxxi. 9, 13; and the Levites, who were dispersed through all the twelve tribes, were particularly appointed to study and to explain it to the rest of the nation; and, notwithstanding the times of defection and idolatry, they were never intirely without prophets, and even many thousands of others, who continued firm in the worship of the true God, and therefore must have retained their regard to the sacred books of the Law.

As to the alarm of king Josiah and his court, on finding a copy of the Law in the temple, it may be accounted for many ways better than upon the supposition of that being the first copy of all, either imposed upon the king, or imposed by him upon the people; neither of which could possibly have been effected. It is not improbable, but that this particular copy might have been the original one, which had been taken out of the ark, and mislaid, in some former idolatrous reign; and the passages which they read might contain some awful denunciations against idolatry, to which they had given but little attention before. Whatever we may conjecture with respect to this particular fact, it can never be thought in the least probable, that a nation so prone to idolatry as the Israelites were,
from

from the time of their settlement in the land of Canaan to the Babylonish captivity, should either forge, or not detect and expose the forgery of books pretending to so high authority, and so hostile to their favourite propensity.

Upon the whole, the Jews have, no doubt, acted the part of most faithful and even scrupulous guardians of their sacred books, for the use of all the world in the times of christianity. After the last of their prophets, Malachi, they admitted no more books into their canon, so as to permit them to be read in their synagogues, though they were written by the most eminent men in their nation; it being a maxim with them, that no book could be entitled to a place in the canon of their scriptures, unless it was written by a prophet, or a person who had had communication with God.

That the scriptures of the Old Testament have not been materially corrupted by the Jews since the promulgation of christianity, notwithstanding it is thought that, out of enmity to christianity, they attempted it in a few passages, (though it was more with respect to the Septuagint Greek than the original Hebrew) is evident from the many prophecies still remaining in their scriptures, concerning the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah, in which the christians always triumphed when they disputed with the Jews. These passages, therefore, we may assure ourselves, would

have been the first that the Jews would have practised upon, if it had been in their power, or in their inclination to do it.

All the books of scripture have also many internal marks of their being the genuine production of the ages in which they are said to have been written, as they contain so many allusions to particular persons, places, opinions, and customs, which are known, from other allowed histories, to have existed in those times; and the historical incidents which the sacred writers occasionally mention, are sufficiently agreeable to other authentic accounts; the variations being no greater than such as are to be found in other genuine histories of the same period. This branch of the evidence of christianity has also been particularly illustrated by Dr. Lardner.

SECTION II.

Of the evidence from testimony in favour of the christian revelation.

TAKING it for granted that the books of scripture are the genuine productions of the persons and times to which they are usually ascribed, I shall proceed to consider the value of the evidence which they contain, for those facts, on
which

which the truth of the Jewish and christian religions depends, beginning with the latter.

We find in the books of the New Testament, and especially the four *Evangelists*, and the book of *Acts*, not only that twelve persons who are called *apostles*, but that thousands of others were witnesses of a continued course of miracles performed by Jesus Christ, during the whole course of his ministry; especially that he was actually put to death, and that great numbers of persons had the most satisfactory evidence that he rose again from the dead, as he himself had foretold. These were persons who had attended upon him constantly, and had had the fairest opportunity of inquiring into the truth of the facts. Many of these witnesses of the miracles of Christ were *strangers*, and others were his most inveterate *enemies*; who, notwithstanding this, could not deny but that he performed many real miracles, though they ascribed some of them to the agency of evil spirits.

The miracles of Christ were of so great notoriety, that Peter, addressing himself to the body of the Jews at Jerusalem, within a short time after the resurrection, had no occasion to produce any particular witnesses of them; but, without being contradicted by any person, appealed to the whole body of the people present, as having already the fullest conviction concerning them, *Acts* ii. 22. St. Paul, also, when he had an audience of King

Agrippa, appealed to his own knowledge and conviction; saying that the things were *not done in a corner*, Acts xxvi. 26.

Even the friends and disciples of Christ were only those who were made so by the evidence of his miracles, and his excellent doctrine, and who must have come to him with strong prejudices, against his being the person that he pretended to be, and against his being possessed of those extraordinary powers which they saw him exert. Had he even performed all that they expected from the Messiah, the obscurity of his birth, and his passing for a Galilean, were sufficient, we find, to make many persons conclude without farther inquiry, that he must be an impostor. All the Jews, however, even the most intelligent, and the most virtuous of them, expected nothing less than a temporal prince, who should assert the freedom of the Jews, and the empire of the world. Nothing, therefore, but the strongest evidence of his having a divine commission, can be supposed to have induced them to receive him in that character, after he had peremptorily declined all kingly honours, and especially after his sufferings and death.

When Christ was actually put to death, we see that his most intimate companions forsook him and fled; and considering the damp which was thrown upon all the views and expectations of the apostles by the ignominious death of their master, their re-assembling

assembling so soon afterwards, and undertaking, in the face of the greatest opposition, to preach the doctrine of their master, and gain converts to the belief of his divine mission, cannot be accounted for, but upon the supposition of their having received the fullest conviction that he rose from the dead, and had authorized them to preach in his name.

So incredulous were the disciples of Christ with respect to the truth of his resurrection, though it was what he himself had expressly foretold, that Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, declared, even after he was informed of it by the rest (who assured him that they themselves had lately seen, and conversed with him) that he could not believe the fact, unless he should actually handle and examine his wounds; and yet even this man did afterwards receive the fullest satisfaction.

That so many of the Jewish nation should have been converted to christianity by the preaching of the apostles, is such a fact, as cannot be accounted for, but upon the supposition of their having received the most satisfactory evidence with respect to the resurrection of Christ, and the power with which the apostles were invested to work miracles in his name.

The whole nation of the Jews are to this day, and, according to all the accounts that we have of them, they ever have been the most obstinate and
incre-

incredulous of all mankind, and therefore the last people in the world to convince or persuade; and they must have been more especially so in such a case as this, where their most favourite prejudices were directly opposed. They must, therefore, have been the least liable to have been imposed upon, and the most unexceptionable witnesses that can be thought of for this purpose.

No reasonable motive can be assigned for the astonishing *perseverance* of the apostles, and other primitive christians, in preaching the gospel, bearing all hardships, and even undergoing death for the sake of it, but the most firm persuasion of their having a reward in heaven; and how could they have come by that firm persuasion, but in consequence of having received the clearest evidence of miracles, in favour of the pretensions and power of Christ.

That a few persons might have had their heads turned, and have acted in an absurd and unaccountable manner, may be supposed; but unless human nature was constituted in a manner quite different from what we see and experience at present (which would be much more extraordinary than any thing that the scheme of revelation requires us to believe) it can never be supposed that *so many* persons as actually incurred reproach and persecution, even unto death, for the sake of the gospel, at the first promulgation of it, should, all of

of them, for so long a course of time, have been so infatuated, as to risk and abandon every thing, without a well-grounded hope of a sufficient recompense; that is, without a rational conviction concerning the resurrection and power of Christ.

Besides, they all of them pretended to some *miraculous gift*, and cannot be supposed to have continued to act the part which they did through life, without a consciousness of their having, and exerting such miraculous powers on proper occasions.

If the heads of the apostles and other primitive christians had been turned by the most preposterous ambition, and they had meant nothing farther than to make themselves conspicuous in the world, it can hardly be supposed but that some of them, at least, would have thought of setting up for themselves, and that the ablest among them would have endeavoured to make tools of the rest. On the contrary, there is not the least appearance of any one of them endeavouring to assume authority over the rest; but they persist through life, as brothers and fellow labourers, in their allegiance to their crucified Lord, referring all their mighty works to his power and spirit.

With this humility and perfect harmony they preached the religion of their master, not only when they were together, but when they were separated from one another, in very distant countries; where, if what they performed were mere *tricks of their*

their own, they had an opportunity of establishing themselves independently of one another. Even the apostle Paul, who preached the gospel without conferring with any of the other apostles, pursued the same conduct, engaging in the very same persecuted interest, and promoting it by the very same methods.

This unambitious conduct of the apostles is the more remarkable, as before the crucifixion of Christ, some of them appeared to be of a different character, eagerly aspiring after worldly honours, and ambitious of pre-eminence over their brethren. This, and other remarkable changes in their disposition and conduct after the death of Christ, and especially their suddenly taking courage to preach the gospel in the face of the greatest dangers, immediately after their cowardly desertion of their master, and after a catastrophe which intirely overturned all their fond hopes and expectations from him, are easily accounted for on the hypothesis of their having been *endued with power from on high*, on the day of Pentecost, but are inexplicable, on the known principles of human nature, without such an hypothesis.

Christians, even in the times of the apostles, were divided into various sects and parties, and the contention was carried on with great heat and animosity among them, some of them opposing the apostles themselves. Now, had any of them been

but

but suspected of contriving or conniving at a fraud, with respect to the foundation of the religion they professed, it could not, in those circumstances, but have been detected and exposed. Yet in arguing with these divided christians, the apostle Paul scruples not to appeal to miracles wrought among them, and even by them, and gives particular directions about the most proper use of the supernatural gifts of which they were possessed. In these circumstances how could he have written in this manner, if he had been sensible that no such miracles had been wrought, and no such supernatural gifts possessed either by himself or them.

That the apostles and primitive christians could not expect to make any lasting advantage of their imposture, admitting that their ruling passion was the ambition of being the founders of a new religion, may be argued from this consideration, that for some time they universally expected the second coming of Christ, to put an end to the world, in that very generation.

If Christ and his apostles were not the weakest of all enthusiasts, which their whole conduct shews them not to have been, they could not but know whether they were inspired of God, and had a power of speaking and acting in his name, or not. Now that men of virtue should pretend to act from God, at the same time that they knew that they had no such commission, cannot be supposed. It follows.

follows, therefore, that, not being gross and weak enthusiasts, they could not be under an illusion themselves; and being good men, friends of virtue, and shewing the most genuine marks of an unfeigned reverence for God, and for truth, they would not attempt to impose upon others.

That the apostles were men possessed of the greatest cunning, so as to conduct, with ability and success, all the parts of so complex an imposture, and which required so many agents of ability equal to their own, and that at the same time they were dupes to the grossest illusions, are contradictory suppositions. To a certain degree, indeed, there may be a mixture of artifice and enthusiasm; and therefore men may be deceived themselves, and endeavour to deceive others. But the *degree* in which it is necessary, for the purpose of infidelity, that these two opposite qualities should be found in Christ and his apostles, and in all those who must necessarily have been in the same scheme, is absolutely impossible, while human nature is what it is; and no example of any thing approaching to it can be found in the history of mankind.

Most of the preceding arguments are peculiarly strong with respect to St. Paul. He had been an inveterate enemy, and persecutor of the christians, a man of great ability, learning, activity, and influence with the leading men of his country; so
that

that he had every thing in this world to expect from his opposition to christianity, and nothing but persecution, ignominy, or almost certain death from embarking in that cause. Yet, notwithstanding this, he suddenly, and without discovering any marks of insanity, or giving any instance of absurdity of conduct in other respects, preached that doctrine which he had opposed, and continued in it to the end of a laborious and painful life, which terminated in a bloody death.

How this can be accounted for, excepting in the manner in which he himself explains it, is to me impossible to conceive. But upon his hypothesis every thing is perfectly easy. He says that Christ spake to him in person, to convince him of his error, and of the folly of his pursuits, after he had been thrown down from his horse, by the flashing of a supernatural light, as he was on his road to Damascus. And this fact is itself extremely probable from the circumstances of it.

This was not in the night time, when apparitions are commonly pretended to be seen, but at mid-day; not when he was alone, and his mind subject to a sudden panic, or fit of remorse, but in company; and not in the company of christians, or of those who saw and heard enough to make them become christians, but of inveterate enemies to christianity, probably his favourite companions, and who when they were afterwards appealed to,
could

could not contradict the facts, of the extraordinary light, and the sound of a voice, though they could not distinguish the *words*; nor could they deny that he was actually struck blind. He was confirmed in the truth of what he was informed of in this vision by recovering his sight, as Christ at the same time foretold, on the prayer of Ananias who baptized him.

The treachery of Judas Iscariot affords a striking evidence of the innocent character, and divine mission of Christ. Circumstanced as this traitor was, and disposed as he must have been, he would certainly have given information of any sinister design of Christ, if he had known of any such thing; and he had the same means of information as the rest of the apostles. His hanging himself was natural enough as the effect of extreme agony and remorse of mind, after so base a piece of treachery, but altogether unaccountable upon the supposition that, by telling the truth only, he might have gained a considerable reward, and at the same time have established himself in the esteem of his country, by exposing an impostor who was the object of general odium, and especially with those who had the chief influence in public affairs.

Upon the whole, it cannot, I think, but be allowed, that the testimony that is given to the history and miracles of Christ, of which we have an account in the books of the New Testament,

is

is the testimony of men who were competent witnesses in the case; having had the fairest opportunity of satisfying themselves concerning the facts, and who had no motive, that we can imagine, for imposing upon the world with respect to them.

Besides the evidence of the divine mission of Christ which arises from the testimony to the reality of his *miracles*, by those who saw and conversed with him, and the tacit acknowledgement of all his contemporaries, we have (on the authority of the same historians) the evidence which arises from the testimony of another prophet, whose claim to a divine communication was allowed by almost the whole body of the Jewish nation, and even the testimony of God himself, declared in supernatural voices from heaven.

The testimony of John the baptist is of considerable importance to the evidence of christianity. The circumstances which attended his birth were very extraordinary, and excited great expectations concerning him. He led a remarkably austere life, without any connection with the world, or its affairs, and had no personal knowledge of Jesus, though they were related. By his exemplary virtue he so far gained the esteem and confidence of the body of the Jews, that the most bigotted and envious of the Pharisees and chief priests, notwithstanding their authority with the people, durst

not

not say in public that he was no prophet. He even died a martyr to his integrity and fidelity, in reproving king Herod.

This remarkable person did not pretend to work miracles, but solemnly declared that he was commissioned to preach the doctrine of repentance, by way of preparation for the coming of the Messiah; and he also solemnly declared that he knew Jesus to be the person by some visible token attending the descent of the spirit of God upon him; by which, he says, it was foretold to him, that he should be able to distinguish the person to whose mission his own was subordinate. Notwithstanding the great credit which John acquired, equal, if not superior to that of any of the former Jewish prophets, he did not pretend to set up for himself, but constantly referred his disciples to Jesus, when they were zealously attached to him, and jealous of the rising reputation of the new prophet.

Christ was also declared to be the son and messenger of God by miraculous voices from heaven; the first of these was pronounced immediately upon his baptism, probably in the hearing of great numbers; the second on the mount of transfiguration, when only three of his disciples were present; and the third in the temple, in the hearing of a promiscuous multitude, of whom some, who were at a distance, thought that it thundered, and others
said

said that an angel spake to him. See Luke iii. 22. Mat. xvii. 5. John xii. 28.

To these three different kinds of evidence, namely that of his works, of John the Baptist, and of God his father, as well as to that of antient prophecies, Jesus himself appeals in his conversation with the Jews: John v. 31, &c.

Some persons seem to be surprised that we find so little in favour of christianity in the writings of Jews and Heathens, who lived about the time of its promulgation. But how can it be supposed that men should speak very favourably of a religion which they did not chuse to embrace? Besides, christianity has all that testimony which can possibly be had from adversaries. It would be highly unreasonable to expect that Jews or Heathens, continuing such, should expressly acknowledge their belief of the resurrection of Christ; but they acknowledge what is a sufficient ground of *our* belief, namely, that the disciples of Christ declared that he did rise from the dead, and that they professed to have seen and conversed with him after his resurrection. This is particularly done by Celsus, and the emperor Julian.

Such facts as these being admitted, we are certainly at liberty to reason from them as well as they. The earlier Jews ascribed some of the miracles of Christ to the power of Beelzebub, and many of the later Jews to the secret virtue of some *ineffable*

name of God, which they pretend that he stole from the temple, or to some arts of forcery, which they conceit that he learned in Egypt; but, the miraculous works of Christ being allowed, we are certainly at liberty to laugh at such hypotheses as these, and may think that we act more reasonably in ascribing them to the power of God only.

Besides, christianity has the testimony of thousands, who, having been bitter enemies, became converts to it, on farther examination; and these are, in fact, the most valuable of all testimonies. Indeed, all the early converts to christianity, the apostles themselves not excepted, may be considered as belonging to this class; because they had strong prejudices to overcome before they could entertain the thought of such a Messiah as Jesus was.

It were to be wished that unbelievers of the present age would carefully consider the evidences which were alledged in favour of christianity by Christ and his apostles themselves, as they are proposed in the Gospels and the book of Acts, and endeavour to account for them. Let them particularly consider the objections that were made to them by the unbelievers of those days, and observe what it was which they then took for granted, and let them consider whether, at this day, they can reasonably take less for granted; or putting themselves in the place of their predecessors, whether they can, in any other respect, make any improvement

provement on their reasonings. If their objections to christianity were really weak and insufficient, their conduct must be condemned, even by modern unbelievers, who must acknowledge that, with their views of things, they ought to have become christians.

Now it is well known that all the early adversaries of christianity, Jews and Gentiles, not only allowed the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, but also admitted that miracles were really wrought by Christ and his apostles, as an evidence of their having a divine commission. And it may be presumed that men who were so much interested in detecting the imposture of christianity, as the high priests and rulers among the Jews, and also as the heathen priests, philosophers, and magistrates (some of whom immediately, and all of whom very soon took alarm at the spread of christianity, being in the highest degree exasperated at it) and who had every possible opportunity for examining the credentials of Christ and his apostles, would have taken the most effectual methods to prevent the growth of a religion that was so exceedingly offensive to them; and they must, no doubt, have been sensible, that the most effectual method would be to remove what the christians themselves alledged to be the foundation of their faith, namely, the credibility of their miracles, which they asserted to have been wrought, and to be at that very time

wrought in its favour. And it appears from the Gospels and the book of Acts, that the enemies of christianity did give the closest attention to the miracles of Christ and his apostles, and not being able to question their reality, they had recourse to such hypotheses to account for them, as any unbeliever of the present age would be ashamed of.

Had christianity given no alarm in Judea at the time when it was first proposed; or had the heathen philosophers and magistrates taken no notice of it till after the death of the apostles, the evidence of the truth of christianity would not have had the strength which it now has, from considering that Christ himself was so obnoxious to the Jewish rulers, that they put him to death, and that so violent a persecution was raised against the disciples of Christ, beginning with the very year of his ascension, that only one of the apostles, and hardly any other person of much eminence among the christians, died a natural death, but died martyrs to their religion; and that all the primitive christians, without exception, suffered very great hardships.

The various circumstances which concur to authenticate the miracles of Christ, and the apostles are well collected into one view by Dr. Jortin, and with it I shall conclude this section. "They were wrought by persons who solemnly appealed to God, and who often declared that they would perform

“ perform them. They were wrought in a public
“ manner, before enemies and unbelievers, in a
“ learned age, and civilized countries, not with
“ any air of ostentation, or for the sake of worldly
“ advantage, but in confirmation of precepts and
“ doctrines agreeable to reason, and useful to
“ mankind, and at a time when their enemies
“ wanted neither power nor inclination to expose
“ them if they had been impostures, and were in
“ no danger either of being insulted by the popu-
“ lace, or persecuted by the civil magistrates for
“ ridiculing the christians.

“ These miracles were also various and nu-
“ merous, they were of a permanent nature, and
“ might be reviewed and re-examined; they had
“ nothing fantastical or cruel in them, but were
“ acts of kindness and beneficence. Miracles
“ having ceased for a long time before Christ ap-
“ peared, the revival of them raised the greater
“ attention. They were attested by proper wit-
“ nesses, were acknowledged by adversaries, were
“ foretold by the prophets, and such as the Jews
“ expected from the Messiah, and actually con-
“ verted multitudes.”

SECTION IV.

Considerations on the resurrection of Christ, and other facts of a similar nature.

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of such particular consequence to the truth of christianity, and is so remarkably circumstanced with respect to its evidence, that it well deserves a distinct consideration. To this fact our Lord himself had appealed, as one considerable evidence of his divine mission; and though he spake figuratively when he gave his enemies warning of it, it is plain that he was sufficiently understood by them. For no sooner was he dead, and laid in the sepulchre, than the chief priests and rulers of the Jews informed the Roman governor concerning it; and, to prevent any possibility of their being imposed upon by his disciples stealing the body, and pretending that he had risen from the dead, they obtained a guard of Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre continually; and lest the soldiers themselves should have been bribed, or, by any other method have been gained over by the disciples, to connive at their scheme of conveying away the body, they fixed a seal to a very large stone, which covered the mouth of the sepulchre.

Having

Having used these precautions, which seem to have been all that human prudence could have dictated, they, no doubt, concluded that, if the disciples should make any attempt to break the sepulchre, they could not but have been observed, and prevented; or if the disciples should have brought an armed force, sufficient to overpower the Roman guard, at least some resistance would have been made; and the carrying off the body by *violence* could have answered no purpose whatever; so that, upon the whole, they might rest assured that if the body was not found when they came to inspect the sepulchre, the removal must have been effected either by a miracle, or in such a manner, as could not answer the purpose of any imposture.

The event was, that the body was removed from the sepulchre, on the day on which Christ had foretold that he should rise from the dead, and this happened very early in the morning, so that very probably, it was not long after the watch had been changed the third time that night.

Let us now examine whether the account which the disciples of Christ, or that which the Jews gave of this event, is the more probable. The apostles, who might have had the account from some of the guard, say that, just before the body was removed, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of God came and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; that his raiment was

white as snow, and his whole appearance particularly bright and dazzling, so that the soldiers were seized with extreme fear, and became as dead men.

Upon this, they all dispersed, and some of them went into the city, and told the high priests all that had passed; but they immediately assembling together, with the other rulers of the Jews, gave money to these soldiers, making them promise to give out that while they slept the disciples of Christ stole his body, and assuring them, that they would take care that the Roman governor should not punish them for their negligence. Accordingly they did what was required of them, and, no doubt, endeavoured to engage all their companions to tell the same story. But it is not improbable, but that some of them might, in the mean time, have told the truth; and other circumstances, and a variety of subsequent evidence, unquestionably prove that there had been a real resurrection.

The angel was still sitting upon the stone, about break of day, where he was seen by Mary Magdalene, and some other women, who had come with a design to embalm the body, and had brought spices with them for that purpose, not having any expectation of his rising again; but being informed of it by the angel, they went in haste, to acquaint his disciples with it. Two of these, Peter and John, immediately ran to the sepulchre, which
they

they found open, and the body gone ; but, instead of any marks of a violent removal, they found the grave cloaths carefully folded up, and laid in separate places, so that some think the body must have miraculously slipped out of them. However, it is not at all probable, that they would have been left behind, and especially so carefully folded, and so regularly disposed, if the body had been removed by violence or stealth.

That Christ should rise again from the dead, was perfectly agreeable to the tenor of his former life, and a proper sequel to it ; but the more substantial evidence of it is, his having been frequently seen by, and having intimately conversed with his former disciples, whose account of it exhibits, in a most natural manner, their surprise and joy, on the occasion of so agreeable, but so unexpected an event. Besides, all the miracles that were wrought by the apostles afterwards, the evidence of which is no less convincing than that of the miracles of Christ himself, and wholly independent of it, are all so many proofs of his resurrection ; for they are plainly parts of a great scheme, which necessarily supposes that most important event.

Let us now attend to some circumstances which shew the extreme improbability of the account which the Jews gave of the removal of the body of Jesus, which is that which the christian writers say they put into the mouths of the soldiers above-

mentioned. It is evident, from all the circumstances of the history, that the disciples of Christ were too much disconcerted and disheartened by the unexpected death of their master (which entirely destroyed all the hopes which they had entertained from him) to think of making any attempt to remove his body ; or if they could have removed, and effectually secreted it, what end could that have answered, without powers to carry on the scheme.

But the scheme of conveying away the body *by stealth* must have appeared the most improbable of all, as it was necessary for this purpose, that every soldier of the guard should not only have been found sleeping at the same time, but so sound asleep, that the removal of a stone, which several women despaired of being able to stir, should not awaken any of them, and that they should all have slept long enough to give them an opportunity both of removing the stone, and taking off the cloaths and spices, in which the body was wrapped ; and those who are acquainted with the manner in which the Jews prepared the bodies of their dead for sepulture, say that this must have required a considerable time ; more, indeed, than it can be imagined that persons who had stolen the body would have ventured to employ ; and lastly, they must also have had time to carry away the body undiscovered.

This

This was also to be done upon a hill, so near the city of Jerusalem, that it is now inclosed within the walls of it, when the moon was at the full, and at the time of passover, when both Jerusalem itself, and all the neighbouring places must have been crowded with people from all parts of Judea.

It adds to the improbability of this story, that the discipline of the Roman soldiers is known to have been exceedingly strict; so that they must all of them have expected either death, or some severe punishment for sleeping upon watch; nor could they have expected any mercy in this case; least of all could they imagine that the Jewish rulers would interpose in their favour, when it was at their particular request that the guard was obtained, and they were so much interested in the watch being strictly kept; and yet no punishment followed upon the occasion, which amounts to a full proof that the Jewish rulers were convinced that the soldiers had done all that could be expected of them.

If it be asked how the soldiers could be brought to fall into the measures of the Jewish rulers, and so readily to tell the lye which they put into their mouths; it may be answered, that, in the terror and consternation they were in, and afraid of punishment, they might be glad to do any thing they were directed to do, especially upon the promise of impunity and a reward. They might be satisfied that Pilate and their Roman officers would

believe nothing of their account of the appearance of an angel, and the miraculous removing of the stone (and they saw nothing more) and they could not pretend that they had been overpowered, when they returned without any marks of having made resistance. Improbable, therefore, as the story was, they might think it the best thing they could do in their circumstances to tell it. It is not unlikely, however, that, reflecting upon the affair afterwards, and hearing the testimony of the apostles to the truth of the resurrection, some of them, at least, might be convinced of it, and give a faithful account of all that they knew concerning it.

If the disciples of Christ had really stolen his body, in the circumstances above-mentioned, it is very extraordinary that the Jews should never have pretended to produce, at least, one positive evidence of the fact. If it had been possible, they would, no doubt, have found somebody, who would have declared that they saw the disciples of Christ in the act of removing the stone, of taking or carrying away the body, or something which they might suppose to be the body; or that some persons, supposed to be the disciples, might have been doing something of this kind, about that time, and near the proper place. We may be satisfied, therefore, that there was no circumstance of this kind of which the Jewish rulers could hope to avail themselves

fellows, in order to strengthen their assertion of the body having been stolen.

When the apostles, presently after this, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, preaching the gospel, and boldly asserting the resurrection of Christ, do the Jewish rulers behave to them as men whom they could convict of a notorious cheat? Nay, they were so far from venturing to charge them with any such thing, that they only punished and threatened them, insisting that they should say no more of the matter. Would the orator Tertullus have missed so fine a topic of declamation, had there been the least colour of truth in this story, when, before King Agrippa, he was bitterly inveighing against Paul, who affirmed that Jesus was alive, when the Jews said that he was dead? Or could Gamaliel, one of the most eminent of the Jewish doctors, have possibly supposed that the hand of God *might* be with the apostles, and have given the advice which he did upon that occasion, if he had known that a cheat had been discovered with respect to the resurrection; or would the whole Sanhedrim have so readily followed his advice, upon that supposition?

Lastly, it may be observed, as a proof of the extreme futility of this story, that the only Evangelist who mentions it, makes no attempt to refute it, seeming to regard it as a thing that was palpably false, and sufficiently known to be so.

Upon the whole, it seems to be hardly possible, that the circumstances attending the resurrection of Christ, or the promulgation of the gospel, which was consequent upon it, could have been better adapted to gain the full conviction of the world in general, and especially in distant ages. The ingenuity of man may fancy a resurrection, and the promulgation of such a religion as the christian, so circumstanced, as, it *may be thought*, would have produced a greater effect; but it does not seem difficult to demonstrate, that any alteration which has yet been suggested for this purpose would have been unfavourable to the real weight of the evidence.

It has been said that Christ ought to have made his appearance to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, in full assembly, and have appeared as publicly after, as he had done before his resurrection. But admitting that this had been the case, I doubt not but the same obdurate minds, which were not conciliated, but more exasperated against him after their being themselves witnesses of the resurrection of Lazarus, and all the other miracles of Christ, would only have been rendered still more inveterate by any other miracles, wrought in favour of a person, who would have done no more than he did in a temporal respect. Besides, it is plain, that they actually had *sufficient* evidence of the resurrection

rection of Christ, which is all that can reasonably be required, and yet did not become christians.

Admitting, however, that the consequence of Christ's appearing in this public manner had been the conversion of the body of the Jewish nation, and of such strangers as should have happened to have been residing at Jerusalem, or in Judea, at that time; would it not have been said, by the unbelievers of this remote age, that the rulers of the Jews and the Roman governor were in the secret; and that, having the management of the whole affair, they could easily make out the story of a resurrection, or any thing else, which they might have thought better suited to answer their purpose; and that all the prophecies which speak of a suffering Messiah, had been undoubtedly forged by them. These things might easily have been said, even in the same age, and at no greater distance than Rome, and much more plausibly than many things that are objected to christianity at this day.

Had Christ himself, after such an event, made his appearance in Rome, accompanied by a solemn deputation of the Jewish elders, he would probably have been treated with ridicule, as the people of Rome might have said that he had never been dead. But let us farther admit, that the Roman emperor, his court, all the chief men in the empire, and the bulk of the people in that age had embraced christianity, and consequently that no christian had been

been persecuted to death for his religion, how would the thing have looked at this distance? Would it not have been said by sceptical people, that it had all the marks of a scheme of worldly policy, and that all the great men of those times had agreed to frame a better kind of religion, when the old systems were worn out? They would have said, that there was no body in those times who had properly inquired into the truth of the facts, or that all the contrary evidence had been suppressed, and that the rapid progress of the new religion was the effect of worldly encouragement.

Had the witnesses of the resurrection been not the whole Jewish nation, but a number of persons of high rank in life, it might have been said that they had availed themselves of their power and influence with the people, to gain credit to their scheme.

At present, the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, and of all the great events on which the truth of christianity is founded, are such as shew that the wisdom of God is superior to that of men, being the most unexceptionable that could have been thought of. They were men of middling circumstances, neither desperate through poverty on the one hand, nor peculiarly within the influence of ambition on the other. They were men of plain understandings, neither so weak as to have been easily imposed upon, nor so cunning and crafty as to have

have had it in their power to impose upon others. They were men of such irreproachable characters, as to afford the least possible suspicion of such a design. They were also in sufficient numbers.

Such men as these were induced, by the evidence of what they saw and heard, in favour of the doctrines and pretensions of Christ, to act counter to the strongest prejudices to which mankind can be subject, they risked every thing that was valuable to them, their ease, their honest reputation, their little fortunes, and their lives. Having been men of low occupations, and timid natures, they boldly preached the doctrine of their master, notwithstanding the most determined opposition from all the powers of the world; and, perhaps, what is the hardest trial of all, they were every where exposed to the greatest ridicule and insult. In these circumstances was christianity professed through the whole Roman empire, for the space of three hundred years.

What considerably strengthens this evidence, with respect to the world at large, is that the Jews are still the inveterate enemies of christianity; so that they cannot be suspected of having ever acted in concert with christians; but should they be gained over even at present, or in any period of time before the gospel shall have been sufficiently preached through the whole world, it might have an unfavourable aspect with respect to those nations

tions who should not then be converted, or their remote posterity; so important a circumstance to the evidence of christianity is the general *unbelief of the Jews*; agreeable to the ideas of the apostle Paul, *He hath shut them up in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.*

On the other hand, when the gospel shall have been sufficiently preached through the whole world, the general conversion of the Jews, and their restoration to their own country, after being so long a dispersed, but a distinct people (which is the subject of so many prophecies) will be such an additional confirmation of the truth of the whole system of revelation, as perhaps no force of prejudice will be able to resist. Of such importance to the whole world will be the extraordinary providence which has attended, and which still attends this people.

Lastly, the very great corruptions of christianity have been the occasion of many persons abandoning it, and writing against it, in this learned and inquisitive age; by which means, the evidences of it have stood such a test as no scheme of religion was ever put to before; and yet, instead of appearing to disadvantage under the severe scrutiny, this trial has been a means of purging it from its many corruptions; men of the greatest virtue, learning, and diligent inquiry, and even many of those who have the least worldly interest in promoting

moting the belief of it, are its steadiest friends; and its enemies are generally such persons as have manifestly never given sufficient attention to the subject, or have not had a competent share of learning to qualify them to judge for themselves; and it is also notorious that very many of them are men of profligate lives and characters, whose minds must, therefore, be unfavourably disposed with respect to the evidences of christianity; so that they must be exceedingly biassed, and consequently, very incompetent judges in the case.

Besides, the things that modern unbelievers cavil at are, generally, trifling circumstances, many of which a better translation of an obscure passage in the books of scripture sufficiently obviates; or else they are levelled not against what christianity really is, but what it has been supposed to be, in ignorant and corrupt ages; and no unbeliever has pretended to detect the imposture of christianity in the same manner in which other impostures have been detected, namely, by sufficient historical evidence; nor have they at all accounted for the rise and propagation of it, on the supposition of its being false.

Upon the whole, it does not appear to me that the wisdom of man could have devised the circumstances of a miraculous history, so as to make it so truly credible as that of the gospel is. If those who are now the most ingenious of its adversaries

had

have been imposed upon themselves, or to have had any motive to impose upon others.

That the history of the Jews, and of the miraculous interpositions of God in their favour, should, from the earliest accounts of them, have been firmly believed by the whole body of that nation, and that, even in their present dispersed and calamitous situation, which has continued for seventeen hundred years, they should retain the same belief, cannot but be admitted to have the greatest weight.

Supposing the history of the departure from Egypt, and all the miraculous circumstances attending it, to have been a mere fiction, it must have been so *notoriously* false, that it could not but have been rejected, whenever it had been published. For things of so extraordinary a nature, on which the authority of all their laws, their most solemn customs, and religious rites, entirely depended, could not but have gained universal attention. The fabulous histories of other nations were always invented very late; and as nothing depended upon them, they may easily be supposed to have been introduced *gradually*, without much notice or alarm. Besides, none of them have stood the test of a rigid scrutiny, but have fallen into universal contempt.

It is true that the history of the Old Testament sets the Jewish nation in general in a very
favour-

favourable point of light, and, on that account, it may be supposed that they would the more readily acquiesce in it, and wish to have it pass for true with their neighbours; but in other respects, also, it represents them, and their most distinguished ancestors, in a very unfavourable light, leaving them under the imputation of so many cruel and base actions, as no descendant of theirs would have wished them to lie under. Among these is the history of Abraham and Isaac denying their wives, the deceit of Jacob, and the abominable treachery of two of his sons, together with the very great faults, and even aggravated crimes of David, and others of their most illustrious heroes and princes.

The fabulous histories of the Greeks and Romans are written in a manner very different from this. Even Josephus, the Jewish historian, who had the Old Testament to write from, and who had it not in his power to forge or alter much, endeavours to give the whole history as favourable a turn as possible; intirely suppressing the story of the golden calf, and others which might tend to give foreigners a disadvantageous idea of his ancestors and nation. What kind of a history may we suppose that such a writer as this would have *invented*, if he had been fairly at liberty to do it; and what does a history written upon so very different a plan, as that of the Old Testament, exhibit,

hibit, but the *face of truth*, however disagreeable and mortifying.

All the most distinguished rites and customs of the Jews are intimately connected with, and founded upon the most distinguished miraculous facts in their history; and some of them, are such as we cannot suppose that any nation would voluntarily impose upon themselves, being exceedingly burthensome, and seemingly hazardous. Among these we may reckon the rite of circumcision, which was probably borrowed by some other nations from them; a weekly day of rest from labour, not plowing their fields, or tilling their grounds, every seventh year, and the appearance of all their males three times in a year at one particular place, when the borders of their country must have been left defenceless, and they could have no dependence but upon an extraordinary providence for their security, which was promised in their law. Add to this that they were surrounded by powerful and enterprising nations, who entertained an inveterate antipathy against them, and consequently could not be expected to neglect the fair opportunities which their festival solemnities afforded to attack their borders, had they not been restrained by a superior influence. Yet their whole history affords not a single instance of any inroad being made upon them at those times.

To this may be added their being forbidden to have any foreign commerce, or to have many horses, which was the great pride of their neighbours in time of peace, and a great advantage to them in time of war.

It has often been said that Moses himself, without any divine instruction, might have formed the body of laws recorded in his writings, and have given all the other directions which he pretended to have received from God. But, besides, that this supposition can never account for the whole nation having always believed that they had been led through the red sea, been fed with manna forty years, heard a supernatural voice delivering the ten commandments from mount Sinai, and having crossed the river Jordan without either boat or bridge, &c. &c. &c. all which facts we find recognized in the most solemn offices of their stated public worship, many centuries after the time of Moses, it is in itself very improbable.

Moses appears, from many circumstances in his history, to have been a man of the greatest meekness, modesty, and diffidence. He was exceedingly averse to assume any public character; he was easily governed by the advice of others; and what is particularly worthy of consideration, he wanted those talents which are peculiarly requisite for the part he is supposed to have acted, viz. those of an *Orator* and a *Warrior*. He had

such

such an impediment in his speech, that he was obliged to take his brother Aaron to speak for him before Pharaoh, and the Israelites. The whole history of their march through the wilderness shews that he had nothing of a military turn, without which more especially no man could have expected to do any thing at the head of a people just revolted from the Egyptians. For it is observable, that in the engagements which they had with those people who opposed their passage, Moses never headed them himself, but left the whole command to Joshua, and others, while he was praying for them at a distance.

It has been said that Moses was a man of excellent understanding and judgment, but his own history by no means favours that supposition. For, excepting those orders and institutions which he published as from God, almost every thing else that is recorded by him shows him to have been a weak man, and of gross understanding. His behaviour with respect to the killing of the Egyptian, and his embarrassment with a multiplicity of business, till he was relieved by the sensible advice of Jethro, and many other circumstances might be alledged in support of this opinion. These things sufficiently demonstrate that Moses, personally considered, was by no means a man capable of devising such a system of laws as his books contain, or of conducting that most intractable nation,

nation, as they were conducted, forty years through the wilderness.

Besides, if Moses had such a capacity, and had been of such a disposition as would have prompted him to act such an imposture as this, he would certainly have made some better provision than he did for his own family and tribe. He had children of his own, and yet they did not succeed him in his extraordinary offices and power, nor do we find them possessed of any peculiar privilege or advantage whatever. They were not even of the higher order of priests, who yet enjoyed no privilege worth coveting; and the tribe of Levi in general, to which he belonged, was worse provided for than any other of the twelve; and, what is particularly disgraceful, Moses himself relates that the posterity of Levi were dispersed among the rest of the tribes as a punishment for the baseness and cruelty of their ancestor, in the affair of the Shechemite

The tribe for which the greatest honours were reserved, in the prophecies of both Jacob and Moses, was that of Judah, with which Moses had no particular connection. This was the tribe which was marked out as the seat of pre-eminence and power, and especially as the tribe from which the Messiah was to arise.

Besides, if Moses had meant to do any great thing for himself, it is not likely that he would

have detained the Israelites so long in the wilderness. Forty years exceeds the whole term of the active part of a man's life, according to the common course of it; and a short time would have been sufficient to instruct the people in the use of weapons, and the art of war, as it was practised in those rude times. Indeed, we do not find that much attention was given to this business, but that, on the contrary, almost their whole time was taken up with instructions on the subjects of legislation, religion, and morals.

Though the Jewish history is far more antient than that of any other nation in the world, and therefore we cannot expect to find it confirmed by any other accounts of such early transactions, yet, from the time that the Greeks and other nations began to write history, their accounts are sufficiently agreeable to the history of the Old Testament, allowance being made for the uncertainty there must have been in the communication of intelligence, in an age in which remote nations had very little intercourse. However, all the leading facts of the Jewish history, even those which respect Moses himself, the deliverance of the Israelites out of the power of the Egyptians, and many particulars in their subsequent history, are related by historians of other nations, with such a mixture of fable and mistake, as might be expected from
from

from people who had no better means of being informed concerning them.

As to the history of the *fall of man*, and other particulars preceding the time of Moses, and the memory of his immediate ancestors, it may be allowed that there is a mixture of fable, or allegory in it, without affecting the history that is properly *Mosaic*, and consequently the truth of the Jewish religion. It should be considered, however, that Moses relates only such of the more remarkable transactions of the times preceding his own, and of his remote ancestors, as it may well be supposed that their descendants would carefully, and might easily transmit to their posterity; and only eight generations intervened between Moses and Noah.



CHAPTER IV.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN
REVELATIONS, DERIVED FROM PRESENT
APPEARANCES.

SECTION I.

*Arguments from the existence, propagation, and good
effects of the Jewish and Christian religions.*

HAVING considered the evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations, as far as it depends upon the testimony of those who received them, and especially of those who have written the history of them, I shall now proceed to lay before my readers some evidence of a different kind, the facts from which it arises being either the subject of universal observation, or recorded in general histories, of universally allowed credit.

The very existence and reception of such systems of religion as the Jewish and christian, are remarkable facts of this kind. That other religions, such as the different species of heathenism, and that of Mohammed, should have been established, and gained credit, may be accounted for without sup-
posing

posing them to be true ; but the Jewish and christian religions were so circumstanced, at their institution, that it seems impossible to account either for their existence, or the credit which they are known to have obtained, without supposing them to be true and divine.

The faith of Jews and christians respecting God, as one being, the maker, governor, and righteous judge of all ; concerning moral duty, and a future state, are so agreeable to reason, and yet so much more just and sublime than the moral and religious systems of other nations, especially about the time when these two religions were severally established (in which both the religion and morals of all their neighbouring nations were remarkably corrupt) that, considering the situation of the Jews and primitive christians, with respect to study and inquiry, we cannot but conclude that they must have had sources of information which other nations had not. Indeed, the writings of the Jews and christians bear no traces of their religious knowledge being the deduction of any extraordinary sagacity or reasoning of their own ; and men who attain to superior knowledge by their own reasoning, and superior powers, are generally ready enough to make a shew of their reason, and are willing to secure to themselves whatever reputation can accrue from it. But here we find admirable systems of religious and moral knowledge

published by persons who disclaim all merit with respect to them, and who do not pretend to have discovered them by their own powers.

The great object of these two religions, especially as fully revealed in the christian, which was the completion of the whole scheme, is so sublime and excellent, that it could hardly have had any other source than the universal parent of good. This object is no less than to teach universal impartial virtue, and a superiority of mind to this world, in a firm faith of another and a better after death; and this truly catholic religion is not calculated for the use of any one people only, or made subservient to any particular form of civil government, but is designed to unite and bless all the nations of the world, under one spiritual head, Christ Jesus.

These observations relate to the Jewish and christian religions jointly, I shall now mention a few others which relate to them severally.

The religious poems and other compositions of the Jews, contain sentiments so admirably just and sublime, that the slightest comparison of them with the religious hymns of other nations, even in the most enlightened ages, cannot but lead us to suspect that the Jews were possessed of advantages for religious knowledge far superior to those of any other people.

While

While all the neighbouring nations were running fast into idolatry, and especially the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, parcelling out the world into a great number of principalities, and assigning a separate divinity for each, Moses teaches a religion which begins with asserting that *one God*, by the word of his own power, and without the assistance or instrumentality of any inferior intelligent being, created the heavens and the earth, and even the sun, moon, and stars themselves, and appointed the proper uses of them all; which struck at the very foundation of the religious systems of all other nations. That great principle which was abandoned by all other nations, namely, the worship of one God, possessor of heaven and earth, and who fills both heaven and earth with his presence, was even the fundamental maxim of the Jewish state, and the great foundation of their civil, as well as religious government.

While the rest of the world were practising the most abominable impure and cruel rites, as acts of religious worship, and thought to recommend themselves to the favour of their gods, by the most absurd and unmeaning ceremonies, without ever having recourse to moral virtue for that purpose, Moses indeed instituted a ceremonial worship; but both he and all the Jewish prophets, repeatedly, and in the strongest terms, assert the perfect moral character of the supreme being, the infinitely

greater importance of purity of heart, and integrity of life, and the utter insignificance of any rites, ceremonies, or offerings without them.

While other nations were addicted to the most wretched superstitions, having recourse to various divinations, and arts of witchcraft, whenever they wanted to get intelligence concerning future events, or the assistance of superior powers, the Jewish people were taught to hold all these things in deserved contempt and abhorrence. They were instructed to expect no information concerning future events, or assistance in any undertaking, but from the one living and true God; and they were commanded to punish all those who pretended to the abominable arts of divination and witchcraft with death. It is to be observed, also, that the Jewish prophets delivered themselves with gravity and seriousness, worthy of the majesty of him that sent them, and did not use those violent convulsions, foamings at the mouth, and extravagant gestures, which the heathen diviners had recourse to, in order to dazzle and impose upon those who consulted them.

So far is there from being any pretence for saying that the Jews were naturally more intelligent than their neighbours, and attained those just notions of religion and morality by their own reason and good sense, that their own history always represents them as stiff-necked, and slow of understanding;

standing; and to this very day their enemies have constantly reproached them as being the most stupid of mankind. Besides, their history shews that the Jews were naturally as prone to idolatry and superstition as any other people could be, and their frequent relapses into the idolatry of their neighbours, notwithstanding the most express warnings, and awful judgments, demonstrate that, had it not been for divine instructions, inculcated again and again, they would have been far from shewing an example of a purer religion, or more rational worship than such as prevailed in other countries. It must also be observed, that the rigorous adherence of the Jews to their religion at present, and which has continued for ages, under the greatest external discouragements, is such, as considering their former proneness to desert it, demonstrates that they must have received the most convincing proof of its truth and divinity.

While the philosophers of other nations taught an exceedingly confined morality, treating those of their own nation only as brethren, and the rest of mankind as enemies, Moses inculcates the principles of the greatest humanity and tenderness in the treatment of strangers, reminding them that they themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt, and that they knew the heart of a stranger.

Upon the whole, it cannot be said that the religion and morality of the books of Moses was such

as might have been expected from the time in which he lived. Was it similar to any thing he could have learned in Egypt, or in any of the neighbouring countries? On the contrary, it was in almost every respect most remarkably the reverse of the opinions and practices of those times, and therefore must have had some other origin.

The form of a free and equal government, which was particularly recommended to the Jews, and under which they lived for a considerable time, was one of which there is no other example in the East, where kingly and arbitrary governments only are known even to this day. Such especially was the government of Egypt, where they had resided above two hundred years, and to the institutions of which it appears that they were remarkably prone, notwithstanding what they had suffered in that country; and all the land of Canaan was under the dominion of a great number of petty kings or tyrants; whereas, it is observed of the Israelites, before the times of Saul (by whose appointment to be king they made an infringement in their original constitution) that every man did what was right in his own eyes. Indeed, the civil government of the Hebrews was so exceedingly favourable to liberty, virtue, and domestic happiness, as, considering the many absurd and iniquitous constitutions of other nations, furnishes a very strong argument for its being of divine appointment.

Lastly,

Lastly, I shall observe, that the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have been exactly fulfilled, some of them long since the books which contain them were translated into other languages, and dispersed all over the world, fully prove that the writers of them had divine communications. But this argument I reserve for a distinct consideration, in favour of the whole system of Jewish and christian revelation, as one.

The very pretensions of Jesus Christ, are a sufficient proof that there was something supernatural in his case. Before his time the Jews had had no prophets for several hundred years, nor do they seem to have expected any before the appearance of the Messiah, or his fore-runner; and no Jew had any idea of extending the proper *kingdom of God* to those who did not conform to the institutions of Moses. How then should it ever have come into the head of any Jew, and especially a person so obscurely born, and so privately educated as Jesus was, to assume more power than any of their former prophets, more than even Moses himself had pretended to, and to act and speak from God by a more constant and intimate kind of inspiration than any before him? How can it be supposed that any Jew should have formed the *idea*, or the *wish*, to say nothing of the *power* of effecting a thing so fundamentally contrary to any notion that was ever

entertained by a Jew, whether, with respect to his character, he was virtuous or vicious.

When the wisest of the heathen philosophers entertained great doubts with respect to a future state, when the belief of it was almost worn out in the world, how can we account for Christ's preaching, with such steadiness and assurance as he did, the doctrine not only of a future state, but of a *resurrection*, of which nothing in nature could have given any man the least idea, and yet to this resurrection Christ referred all the hopes of his followers, and gave the fullest proof of his own entire persuasion concerning it, by calmly yielding himself up to death, in full confidence of rising again from the dead in a very few days, as a proof of the divinity of his doctrine and mission, and a pattern of a future and general resurrection. How, I say, can we account for these extraordinary views, or this constancy in the pursuit of them, but upon the supposition that Christ was inspired, and authorized by God in preaching and acting as he did?

The rise of so remarkable a religion as the christian, in the circumstances in which it made its first appearance, and also the invincible patience and fortitude of the primitive christians, in persevering in the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the ridicule and severe persecution to which they were thereby exposed, both from the
Jews

Jews and the rest of the world, and the readiness with which such numbers of them died martyrs to their profession, are easily accounted for on the supposition that christianity is true; but they must certainly be puzzling facts to an unbeliever, who considers the uniformity of human nature, how strong a conviction the conduct of the primitive christians implies, and what proofs are necessary to produce that conviction; and this not in the case of a single person, for which no reason would have been required, but of great numbers, not of Jews only, but of all nations of the world, and some the most learned and inquisitive of their age.

The time and manner in which the Jewish and christian revelations were promulgated, were so admirably adapted to the state and circumstances of the world, and were such a seasonable check upon the disorders of it, as makes it exceedingly probable that a scheme so truly excellent, and so seasonably applied, could only proceed from the *father of lights*, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*.

Abraham and his posterity began to be distinguished by God at the very time that the primitive religion of mankind began to degenerate into idolatry; so that, for many ages, they bore their testimony to the unity, the supremacy, moral character, and government of God; and being situated in the very center of the then civilized part of the world, they must have been some check upon the
pre-

prevailing idolatry, and the wickedness which accompanied it. And, bad as the state of things was in the heathen world, it is very probable that, without this provision, it would have been much worse; and it is remarkable, that the idolatry and wickedness of the great civilized nations, in the neighbourhood of Judea, far exceeded that of the more uncivilized part of the world. The systems of idolatry which now subsist in Asia, Africa, or America, are innocent things compared with the horrid systems of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Canaanites, or Tyrians, or even than the religions of Greece, of Rome, and that of all this western part of the world.

When the Jews were infected by the religious customs of their neighbours, and were brought back to the worship of the one true God (as they always were) by very severe judgments, in which the hand of God was very conspicuous, particularly when they were brought back from a state of captivity among other nations, it could not but be an useful lesson to their neighbours, as well as to themselves; and many facts in the Jewish history make it evident, that their religion, and their prophets were much revered in the neighbouring states. This we see particularly in the history of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites, and of the application made to the prophet Elisha by Naaman, and Hazael persons of distinguished rank in the court
of

of the king of Syria. The decrees of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon also, and those of the first kings of Persia, which were published through all the provinces of those extensive empires, must have made the Jews and their religion generally known and respected.

In later times, after the conquest of Alexander the Great, we both find great numbers of strangers residing in Judea, on the account of religion, and also that the Jews themselves were dispersed in a most remarkable manner, into every part of the civilized world, there being no city, or place of note, without them. Their assiduity in making proselytes is sufficiently known, and the effects of it are manifest in the number of *devout Gentiles*, who were brought over to the worship of the true God, though it is probable they did not choose to be initiated into all the rights of the Jewish religion.

That the benefit of the Jewish religion was not to be confined to that nation, but was also to have a considerable influence on the minds even of distant nations, is evident from many passages of the books of Moses; as when it is said that God would be glorified by their means in the sight of all the heathen, &c. See Deut. iv. 6. Ps. xvi. 23.

The christian religion has evidently effected a reformation of the idolatry, and abominable customs of the Gentile world; an effect which all the wisdom and philosophy of mankind would never have produced.

produced. There are numerous testimonies of the heathens in favour of the good morals of the primitive christians. Celsus owns that there were among them many temperate, modest, and understanding persons; and the emperor Julian recommends to the heathen pontiffs the example of the christians, for their kindness and humanity to strangers, and not only to those of their own religion, but to the heathens, and for their seeming sanctity of life; and to this he ascribes the progress that christianity had made in the world.

Christianity has also bettered the state of the world in a civil and political respect, giving men a just idea of their mutual relations and natural rights, and thereby gradually abolishing slavery, with the servile ideas which introduced it, and also many cruel and barbarous customs. The generous principles of christianity have greatly contributed to render those European governments, which are nominally arbitrary, more favourable to security and happiness than the freest antient heathen states. The corruption of christianity has, no doubt, greatly lessened its good effects; but still, as it may be clearly proved, that the very worst state of Christendom, with respect to religion, and the influence of it, was preferable to heathenism, at the time of the promulgation of christianity, it may be hoped that, with the restoration of genuine christianity;

tianity, we shall see the revival of all the happy effects of it.

The time of the promulgation of christianity was the most seasonable that could have been chosen, both with respect to its evidence, and its salutary effects. It is unquestionable, that the heathen world was then most deplorably corrupt, without the least hope of a remedy by any natural means; and even the generality of the Jews had greatly departed from the genuine moral principles of their own divine religion, and a very considerable sect of them had abandoned the doctrine of a future state.

At this remarkable period almost all the civilized part of the world composed one immense empire, by which means the knowledge of christianity was readily communicated from one country to another; and the apostles had the easier access to every place of note by means of the Jews, who were previously settled there, in whose synagogues they had an opportunity of preaching both to the Jews, and also to the Gentile inhabitants.

It was, also, a circumstance of great moment to the evidence of Christianity, that it was promulgated in the most learned and inquisitive age in all antiquity; so that great numbers of persons would have both the inclination, and ability to enquire into it, and satisfy themselves concerning it.

All

All these circumstances put together, certainly give us the idea of a wise and kind parent, interposing in favour of his offspring, at a time when they stood in most need of it, adapting his relief to their real occasions, and applying it in the most seasonable and judicious manner.

SECTION II.

Arguments from standing Customs, &c. in favour of the Jewish and christian religions.

THERE are several religious customs which have been constantly observed by Jews and Christians, concerning which no probable conjecture can be formed, except that which is alleged in the history of those revelations, as the observance of one day in seven for the purpose of rest from labour, in commemoration of God's having rested or ceased from his work after the six days of creation; the *Passover*, in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites when all the first born of the Egyptians were destroyed; the feast of *Pentecost*, which was designed to perpetuate the memory of the giving of the law from mount Sinai; and the feast of *Tabernacles*, to remind them of their having lived in tents in their passage through the wilderness. Of this kind also, is the celebration

celebration of the *Lord's Supper* among christians, in order to commemorate the death of Christ, which it cannot be supposed that they would have done, if he had not likewise risen from the dead, as he himself had foretold.

Now *solemn customs* are universally acknowledged to be, in many cases, the best memorials of important events; because they suppose a whole people repeating their testimony to them as often as the rite is celebrated; and this being continued from generation to generation, the original evidence has all the strength that it could possibly have, when transmitted to us by succession.

It will be said that we find in the heathen world religious customs, which are said to have been instituted in commemoration of such remarkable events as suppose the truths of their religions, as Eleusinian mysteries, in which were represented the rape of Proserpine, and the introduction of corn among the Athenians by her mother Ceres. But there is this essential difference between the religious customs of the Jews or christians, and such as these among the heathens. The Jews and christians have *written histories* of all their religious institutions of equal antiquity with the institutions themselves; and in these histories both the origin of the custom is recorded, and the manner in which every thing relating to it is to be performed, is particularly described. On the contrary,

trary, the Greek and Roman writers of later ages, finding a practice in use, before the invention of letters, might easily add to the traditional account of it, and so embellish the narration, that, in time, the use of the custom, which had some foundation in history, might be essentially changed.

Thus I make no doubt but that, with respect to Eleusinian mysteries, there was a woman called Ceres, who, or her son Triptolemus, taught the Athenians the use of corn, that she had a daughter called Proserpine, who was stolen from her by some person whose name was Pluto. But that this Pluto was God of the infernal regions, and carried his wife thither, and that Ceres lighted a torch at mount Etna, and went in quest of her all over the world, was, most probably, an embellishment of the poets, and no necessary inference from the custom.

Customs with merely traditional explanations are very apt to vary in different places, so that, in a course of many years, there being no written history to rectify any mistake, both the practice itself, and the account of it may easily become, by means of successive innovations, quite unlike what they were originally. If we had not histories of England to have recourse to, how differently might our customs of wearing oak on the twenty-ninth of May, and making bon-fires on the fifth of November have been represented? Nay, we have many
customs

customs which have no doubt, been kept up, without interruption from the time of heathenism, the origin of which is merely conjectural, even among the learned, and altogether unknown to the common people who practice them.

On the subject of this part of my work I must observe, that the earth itself bears several indelible marks of the transactions which are recorded in the histories of the Jewish and christian religions. At least, they are such as are easily and clearly accounted for, on the supposition that those histories are true, and they are not easily accounted for on the supposition that they are false.

That there has been some such convulsion in the earth, as must have been produced by the general deluge, is acknowledged by many naturalists even those who are not believers in revelation. The dead sea is very likely to have been occasioned by such a destruction of an inhabited country as is related in the Mosaic history of Sodom and Gomorrah. Travellers of unquestionable authority say, that it is almost possible to trace the progress of the children of Israel through the wilderness. More especially, several of them have given drawings of the rock at Rephidim, and they are unanimous in their opinion that the holes and channels which are worn in it must have been made by water, and yet that it is in a place where it is not at all probable that there should ever have been any natural spring or river,
and

and where there is far from being any water at present. Matthew says that the *rocks were rent* at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus; and travellers say that there is, at this day, a most remarkable cleft in the rocks of mount Calvary, such as cannot well be supposed to have been produced by any natural earthquake, not having separated the *strata*, but divided them all perpendicularly.

These last-mentioned circumstances are far from amounting to a demonstration of the truth of the Jewish and christian histories, but they agree so remarkably with them, as must add to their credibility; and all the facts which have been recited in this part put together, certainly represent the known state of things to be such, as cannot be accounted for without supposing those histories to be true. Admitting the truth of those histories, the present state of things has arisen easily, and naturally from the preceding; but on the contrary supposition, we can see no connection between them, so that what is known to all the world, and is the subject of every day's observation, is altogether inexplicable.

SECTION III.

Various internal evidences of the truth of the scripture history.

BESIDES the *direct* evidences, which may be drawn from the canonical books of the New Testament, in favour of the truth of christianity, an attentive reader of them cannot but observe several internal characters, which bear the strongest marks of genuineness and truth, on account of their perfect resemblance to other genuine and true histories. Some of these circumstances, intermixed, as they necessarily are, with others of a different nature, I shall take notice of in this place. Every thing of this nature is plainly a *standing evidence* of the truth of the christian history, independent of any testimony in its favour.

The whole of the scripture history abounds with so many particulars concerning times, places, and persons, as are strong internal marks of authenticity, and make it look exceedingly unlike any fiction. Besides, it is hardly possible to imagine any reason or motive for contriving such a history as that of the Old Testament, and endeavouring to impose it upon the Jewish nation, as the genuine history

history of their ancestors, and the only authentic standard of their laws and customs.

The Jewish history is also very unlike the accounts which the writers of all other nations have given of their antiquities, and has much more the appearance of truth, with respect to the times assigned for *generations of men*, and *successions of Kings*. Those of the Jewish history, from before the time of Moses, are agreeable to the present state of things, and the present condition of human life, whereas the antient histories of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, represent the term of human life, and the state of human affairs, as in a condition much unlike what it is now, and such as it is still more improbable that it should have been then. The reigns of Kings do not, at a medium, exceed nineteen years. This Sir Isaac Newton has shewn from the histories of all nations which are certainly known to us.

Now those of the Kings of Judah and Israel do not exceed, but fall short of this number; whereas, those of the states above-mentioned, are said to have reigned, one with another, some thirty, and others forty years a-piece, and this in times of great confusion, when many of them died violent deaths. In like manner, the generations of men, at a medium, are found, by Sir Isaac Newton, to have had an interval of about thirty years, and such they will be found to have been in the Jewish history,

history, which is, therefore, probable; but in those of some other nations, this interval must have been fifty or sixty years, which is altogether improbable.

The different accounts of the same transaction, written by different Evangelists, agree in all the principal things, which shews that they had equally attended to them, and had the same ideas of them; but they relate their histories in a different order and manner, and with many variations in small circumstances; which shews that they did not write in concert, as they must have done to have agreed so well as they do, if they had not written from their memories, which were equally impressed with the idea of all the principal transactions.

The traces of a most *excellent character*, especially of great humility, integrity, benevolence and devotion, which are apparent in the authors of the New Testament, supply a very strong internal proof, that they have not endeavoured to impose upon mankind. Whether a man himself may intend to do it or not, it will be impossible for him either to speak or write much, without giving to an attentive observer, some idea of his own moral character, especially if the subject be of a moral nature, and have the most distant relation to religion. In this case, the greatest artifice, attention, and address, will not be sufficient to conceal every

circumstance that has a connection with *feelings*, and *dispositions of mind*.

Now the writers of the New Testament were very evidently men of no art or cunning whatever. Except St. Paul, they must have been men of very plain understandings; and though not illiterate, yet some of them were barely capable of expressing themselves with propriety upon necessary occasions. Now, that men of this character should even think of, or attempt, and much less should actually carry on, and succeed in a scheme of such complicated imposture as the history of Christ and of the apostles must be, if it were not founded in truth, is altogether incredible. In fact, this would be more miraculous than any thing that these writers relate concerning themselves or their master.

On the contrary, we cannot but see, in the writings of the Evangelists, the plainest marks of a genuine love of truth, and of a disposition the farthest in the world from a design to deceive and impose upon others, even for their good. It is hardly possible to read their writings with attention, without imbibing something of their excellent spirit, feeling something of their ardent love of virtue, their zeal to promote the best interests of mankind, their strong attachment to their lord and master, their reverence for God, and devotedness to his will.

The

The writers of the New Testament have not had the art, nor do they seem to have had the disposition to conceal their own failings, or the objections that were made to the character or pretensions of their master; but they relate incidents of this kind with as little disguise, and as great simplicity, as they do any other parts of their history. Can it be thought that any friend of the Apostle Peter would have invented the disgraceful story of his cowardly desertion of his master, or that any friend of James and John would have mentioned their ambitious views, and the mortifying reproof which was given them by Jesus on that account?

There is not in any of the Evangelists one direct encomium on any of the apostles, or even on their master himself. The very high opinion which we cannot help forming of his character, from the perusal of their writings, is collected intirely from *facts*, *discourses*, and *incidents* indirectly mentioned; and men who had been much solicitous about their character and reputation in the world, would hardly have trusted to this. Nothing is more common in antient heathen writers than direct encomiums on their friends, their patrons, and even on themselves. This is even the case with writers of the greatest ingenuity, and the best understanding, who might have been thought to have perceived the folly of such excessive vanity. But the whole narrative of the evangelical historians shews them to

have been men altogether void of art or design, men who wrote from their memory only, and who were, indeed, little capable of framing a *cunningly devised fable*. Upon the whole, there are no writings in the world that have so many internal characters of truth.

The very *character of Jesus Christ* is so exceedingly unlike any other character whatever in the whole history of mankind, there is something in it so remarkably great and extraordinary, especially such an amazing mixture of dignity and condescension, that we cannot suppose that such men as the Evangelists should have conceived it, or have supported it so uniformly as they have done, on a great variety of occasions. The *fact* demonstrates that they must have had an *original* to copy after. In this case they must have written from their memories, and not from imagination.

I would not scruple to appeal to any person, whose moral sentiments have not been perverted, whether he can possibly reconcile the character of Christ, the doctrines which he taught, and his general conduct, with that of an enthusiast or an impostor, and consequently whether his history does not on this account bear internal marks of truth. He taught and laboriously inculcated the precepts of the purest morality. He did not puzzle his hearers with subtle distinctions in morals, but insisted chiefly upon great and general principles,

as the love of God, the love of mankind, and universal purity of heart, which are calculated to form a complete character, adapted to every station and condition in life; and he more especially enforced those virtues which are the least ostentatious, but the most essential to true greatness and excellence of character, viz. the forgiveness of injuries, humility, contentment, and resignation to the will of God.

He never consulted his own ease or pleasure, but constantly laboured and felt for others, going about doing good to the souls and bodies of men. He spared neither the faults of his friends, nor the vices of his enemies, though the former were ever so dear to him, and the latter ever so powerful and inveterate. He discovered the most astonishing wisdom and presence of mind whenever ensnaring questions were put to him. He sought no worldly emoluments or honours, but persisted in a course of life which rendered him in the highest degree obnoxious to those who were in power; and when he deemed the great purpose of his useful life to be accomplished, he no longer secreted himself from the malice of his persecutors, but in a firm belief, and with a peremptory declaration, that he should rise to the most distinguished greatness, and that he should raise all his disciples and friends to similar honours in a future life, he submitted, with ini-

mitable calmness and composure, to a most cruel and ignominious death.

If there be any truth in history, all this, and much more than this, was unquestionably *fact*. Now, what is there in human nature, or in the history of mankind, that can lead us to imagine that the man who could act this part should solemnly assert that he was commissioned by God to do it, without really having such a commission. A good man will immediately say, if divine interpositions be possible in themselves, and if God has ever spoken by man, Jesus Christ must certainly have been the man; and an intelligent person may perceive that the time in which he lived was the most proper time for his appearance. The man whose life and conversation is agreeable to the gospel, and who feels that he enjoys the advantages of his being and condition to the greatest perfection in consequence of it, must feel what will be to him the most irresistible evidence that the gospel proceeds from the giver of every good and perfect gift. *He has the witness in himself, and has peace and joy in believing.*

The discourses of our Lord before his death are certainly altogether unaccountable upon the supposition of his being an impostor. They discover the greatest sense of personal dignity and importance, the most perfect goodness and benevolence of heart, the most tender affection to his immediate followers,

followers, and the strongest sympathy with them under a prospect of the consternation into which they would be thrown by his approaching death ; and yet, though he endeavoured to suggest the most proper and effectual considerations to encourage and support them under so severe a trial, he is careful to give them no hopes of any advancement or happiness in this world, but only in those mansions which he was going to prepare for them, after they should be so hated of all men, that he who killed them should think that he did God service. With what view could an impostor be supposed to talk in this strain, or what could a few illiterate men expect to gain by supporting the pretensions of a man who wanted to impose upon all the world, and who, after being prosecuted as a criminal, was condemned and crucified ?

In the discourses of Christ we perceive a character and manner, in several respects, peculiar to himself, even much more so than that of Socrates in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. It is even considerably different from that of Moses, or any of the antient prophets, which a Jew, who had invented, would probably have imitated. This style and manner being so truly original, has, certainly, the appearance of being copied from real life. Besides, the discourses of Christ are not general declamations on the subject of virtue and vice, but are accompanied with many circumstances re-

lating to particular persons, times, and places, which a person who wrote from imagination would never have thought of, or at least would not have hazarded.

The manner in which Christ and his apostles proposed and enforced the evidences of their mission, affords a very strong presumptive argument that they were no impostors. They generally exhibited their proofs without the least comment upon them, leaving them to produce their own natural effect upon the mind of the unprejudiced observer. At other times they plainly and peremptorily assert their commission from God, simply appealing to the miracles which they wrought, or to antient allowed prophecies in favour of their pretensions; never reasoning about the force of them, or of their own accord starting and obviating objections, though they never declined giving plain and satisfactory answers to all that were proposed to them.

On the other hand, impostors, conscious of their having no satisfactory proof of what they pretend to be, never fail to make a great parade of the little seeming evidence which they can venture to alledge; they are quick-sighted to foresee, and ready to obviate every objection to which they can make any plausible reply, and they artfully evade such as they cannot answer. Such was the conduct of Mohammed, as a person of any tolerable dif-

discernment may perceive in reading the Koran ; and the very reverse was the conduct of Christ and his apostles, as must be obvious to any person who reads the Gospels and the book of Acts.

Upon the whole, we cannot but conclude, that the Evangelical history has all the *air* and the usual *characteristics* of truth ; and that men circumstanced as the writers of the New Testament were, should have written as they have done, without writing from known facts, is altogether incredible, and the whole history of mankind can exhibit nothing parallel to it.



CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION FROM
PROPHECY.

THE last course of arguments which I shall produce in favour of the Jewish and christian revelations is that which is derived from prophecy, which is of a mixed nature, depending in part upon the testimony of the friends of revelation that such prophecies were delivered, and upon credible history that they have been fulfilled. In some cases, however, it is a matter of public notoriety, that the books which contain the prophecies were extant long before the events to which it is asserted that they correspond ; so that this argument borrows no aid from the testimony of the friends of revelation only.

It must be acknowledged that God only can foresee, and with certainty foretel future events, at least such as are very remote, and which depend upon causes which did not exist, or which could not be known by man to exist, at the time when they were foretold. It is not necessary, however, that the event should correspond to the prophecy so exactly, as that it might have been distinctly described before it came to pass. For in how dark
and

and obscure a manner soever the prophecy be expressed, it will be sufficiently manifest that it came from God, if, after the event, the correspondence between them be so great, that human foresight could not have described it in such a manner, and if it be highly improbable, or impossible, that it should have been described in such a manner at random. But many prophecies recorded in the scriptures were as intelligible before as after the event, and yet they did not at all contribute to their own accomplishment, by inducing the friends of revelation to exert themselves, in order to bring about the thing foretold; the event being produced by natural and foreign causes.

Of the many prophecies which are recorded in the books of scripture, I shall only mention a few of the more considerable, reciting in the first place, the words of the prediction, and then relating from history the corresponding events.

SECTION I.

Prophecies relating to various nations which had connections with the Jews.

THE prophecies concerning the posterity of Abraham by ISHMAEL, have been remarkably fulfilled; and the present state of the Arabs, who

are chiefly descended from Ishmael, is an attestation of their truth and divinity.

Several of these predictions imply, that the posterity of Ishmael should be numerous; as Gen. xvi. 6.—12. *And the angel of the Lord said unto Hagar, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, and it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, and he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.* To Abraham also God said, Gen. xxi. 13. *And also of the son of the bond woman will I make a nation, because he is of thy seed.* In several other places the prophecy concerning Ishmael being a great nation is repeated; as Gen. xxi. 20. with the additional circumstances of his begetting *twelve princes.*

Now all these particulars have been remarkably fulfilled. The descendants of Ishmael were a considerable nation in very early times, and under Mohammed and his successors, the Arabs extended their conquests over a great part of the world. All the northern coasts of Africa abound with Arabs, Palestine is now almost entirely occupied by them; they also still retain their antient seats, and are as numerous there as ever.

It was said that Ishmael should be a *wild man*, and the Arabs are wild and intractable even to a proverb.

verb. It was said that *his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him*, and it is well known that the Arabs, and, probably, *the Arabs only*, of all the nations of the world, have constantly lived in a state of hostility with all mankind; many of them subsisting by plundering their neighbours, and the travellers and caravans which are obliged to pass through any part of their country; and besides this, their different clans and chiefs are almost always at war with one another.

It seems to be intimated, by Ishmael's *dwelling in the midst of all his brethren*, that his posterity should *continue* to dwell among them, and to subsist as a separate nation, notwithstanding this state of constant hostility; and it is truly remarkable, that, though the conquest of Arabia has been attempted by almost all the great empires which have bordered upon them, it has never yet been subdued; and no nation ever made the attempt without repenting of it; having met with nothing but disgrace and loss. This was most remarkably the case in the time of Trajan, the most warlike of all the Roman emperors, and, when the empire was in its greatest strength.

The destruction of NINEVEH, the greatest and most flourishing city in the world while it stood, and the capital of the Assyrian empire, which subdued the ten tribes, and carried them captive, was distinctly and peremptorily foretold by the prophet
Nahum,

Nahum, probably about the time of the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians; and in about seventy years after that great empire was conquered, and the capital of it destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians.

BABYLON succeeded Nineveh in power and splendor, and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon conquered the Jews, and carried them into captivity; yet long before this event, and even before the Babylonians made any great figure among the nations, the utter ruin of their city and empire was foretold. The prophecies concerning it are long and circumstantial, and the description that is given of the condition to which it should be reduced corresponds most exactly to several successive stages of it; and the whole prophecy is completely verified at this day.

The destruction of Babylon is foretold in general terms by Isaiah xxi. 9. and by Jeremiah l. 17, 18. and li. 8. The time of this event was fixed by Jeremiah, who wrote at the time that the Babylonian empire was in its greatest strength and glory, Jer. xxv. 11, 12. *These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years, and it shall come to pass, that when seventy years are accomplished, I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, says the Lord.*

The conquests of Cyrus, who besieged and took Babylon, were distinctly foretold by Isaiah; and that great conqueror is even mentioned by name,

Is. xlv.

Is. xlv. 1. &c. We have also an account of both those nations which joined in the conquest of Babylon, Is. xxi. 2. *Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media; and also in Jeremiah, li, 11. The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it.*

The very manner in which the city was taken seems to have been alluded to in Isaiah, xlv. 27. *That says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.* Also in Jeremiah, l. 28. *A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up; and again, li. 36. I will dry up her seas, and make her springs dry.* For the stratagem that Cyrus made use of to take the place was to divert the course of the river, and make his army enter the city, through the midst of which it had flowed, by its channel, which was then left dry.

The prophecies in which the utter destruction of Babylon is foretold are remarkably emphatical, and the accomplishment of them has been no less remarkably exact. Is. xiii. 19.—22. *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there, but wild beasts of the deserts shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance*

dance there; and the wild beasts of the island shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

Also 14, 22, 23. For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts. Jer. 1. 9. &c. For lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the North country, and they shall set themselves in array against her. From thence she shall be taken. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited; but it shall be wholly desolate. Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. For it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore, the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the island (that is, foreign wild beasts, not natives of the country) shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein, and it shall be no more inhabited for ever, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

History shews the full accomplishment of these and many other very circumstantial prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon. This great city never recovered the blow which it received from Cyrus; for the river never returned to its old channel;

nel; and the neighbouring country becoming marshy, it soon became a very disagreeable situation, and in time not habitable. The destruction of the *idols of Babylon* had been very particularly foretold, and it was fully accomplished by Xerxes, who returned defeated, and disappointed from Greece, wreaked his vengeance upon Babylon, taking its treasures, and destroying all its idols, which the Persians held in abhorrence. *Is. xxi. 9. Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her Gods he has broken to the ground, xlv. 1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle. Jer. 1. 2. Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. li. 44. &c. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he has swallowed up.* The same circumstance is repeated afterwards, and it was fulfilled when Cyrus restored to the Jews the vessels of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem, and had lodged in the temple of Bel.

The *gradual desolation* of Babylon, till it came to that state of utter destruction, which is described by the prophets, is truly remarkable. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote a little before the time of Christ, says that the buildings were then ruined and decayed, a small part of it only being inhabited, and the rest of the inclosure employed in tillage. Pliny,

who

who wrote in the first century after Christ, says that Babylon was reduced to solitude ; being exhausted by the neighbourhood of Selucia, which had been built upon the Tygris, not very far from it. Pausanias, who wrote about the middle of the second century, says that of Babylon, the greatest city that the sun ever saw, there was nothing remaining but the walls ; and Lucian who wrote about the same time, says that in a little time it would be sought for and not be found, like Nineveh. In the time of Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, the whole inclosure of the walls of Babylon was actually converted into a chace for keeping wild beasts, and was used for that, and no other purpose, by many of the kings of Persia. At length even the walls of Babylon, so much celebrated for their height and strength, were demolished ; but whether by the Saracens, who conquered that country, is not known.

We find no mention made of Babylon for many centuries after this ; but Benjamin, a Jew of Tudela, who travelled into that country, about seven hundred years ago, says that there then remained some of the ruins of Babylon, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, but that people were afraid to go into the place, on account of the serpents and scorpions with which it swarmed. At present, it is not agreed among travellers where the great city of Babylon stood.

The

The prophecies concerning TYRE were, likewise, exceedingly numerous, referring to several successive periods in the history of that great commercial city; and they have all been remarkably fulfilled. I shall only mention the last of them, as it corresponds to the present state of Tyre. It was delivered by Ezekiel, who prophesied during the time of the Babylonish captivity. Ez. xxvi. 3. &c. *Thus says the Lord God, Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up, and they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it saith the Lord God.* The same circumstance is repeated afterwards, v. 14. *I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God;* and again v. 21. *I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more. Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.*

If we trace the history of this great city, we shall find that it suffered so much in consequence of several conquests, that there is not now the least trace of the antient city; and that which was afterwards built upon an island, and was called the *new city*, is now a heap of ruins, and is only visited
by

by a few fishermen. Parvillerius, a Jesuit, whom Huetius, who was acquainted with him, calls a very candid man, and who resided ten years in Syria, said, that when he approached the ruins of Tyre, and beheld the rocks stretched forth to the sea, and the great stones scattered up and down on the shore, made clean and smooth by the sun, the waves, and the winds, and of no use but for the drying of fishermen's nets, many of which happened to be at that time spread upon them, the prospect brought to his mind the prophecies of Ezekiel above-mentioned.

The fulfilment of prophecies concerning EGYPT is also very remarkable. They corresponded to several successive periods of its history, and the last of them is completely verified in the present state of that once great and noble, but now enslaved and miserable country. After the desolation of that land, and the captivity of the people by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel prophesied (xxix. 14. 15.) that it should be a *base kingdom*. *It shall be the basest of kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.* xxx. 12, 13. *I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked, and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein by the hand of strangers; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt.*

History

History shews that, from that time to the present, Egypt has never had a prince of its own; but has been successively under the power of the Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, Mamluks, and Turks.

SECTION II.

Prophecies relating to the MESSIAH.

ALMOST the whole of the JEWISH HISTORY was the subject of exceedingly clear and distinct prophecies. The multitudes that should descend from Abraham were repeatedly foretold to that patriarch; the different fates of Esau and Jacob were foretold to Isaac; and the condition of each of the twelve tribes was the subject of the prophecy of Jacob when he lay on his death-bed, and also of that of Moses. The duration of their state of bondage in Egypt was made known to Abraham, and a great number of particular events were foretold by several prophets in every period of their history to the Babylonish captivity, which Jeremiah foretold would last seventy years, and so long, and no longer, it did continue, from the first captivity under Jehoiakim, to the return of the Jews under Cyrus, or from the destruction of the
the

the temple by Nebuchadnezzar to the rebuilding of it under Darius.

But those prophecies in which we are most interested as christians, are those which relate to the MESSIAH; whose coming was kept in view from the first of the communications of God to mankind, to the suspension of prophecy under Malachi.

As Christ and his apostles assert that all these prophecies are fulfilled, or to be fulfilled in him, it becomes us the more to study them, and to trace the correspondence between the prophecies and the events. I shall therefore collect into one view the principal circumstances relating to the Messiah, which are referred to by the prophets of the Old Testament, and which are known to correspond to the history of Christ.

We learn from these prophecies, that the Jews had reason to expect the appearance of a very glorious person, by means of whom both themselves and the rest of the world would receive very great advantages, of a spiritual nature; that he would make his appearance in mean circumstances, and that though he should lead a humble and exemplary life, working benevolent miracles, he should be rejected, and put to death; but that his death would be a principal means of promoting the great end of his coming, namely, the putting away of sin, or the reformation of the world; that after
this

this state of humiliation and suffering, he should triumph over all his enemies, and establish a kingdom, which should extend over the whole world, and last to the end of time. This person, who, in the prophecies, is called *Shiloh* and *Messiah*, was to be a descendant of Abraham and David, to be born at Bethlehem, and to be preceded by a person resembling Elijah, to prepare his way. Lastly, he was to make his appearance while the second temple of the Jews was standing, and about five hundred years after the time of Ezra.

The following passages from the Old Testament scriptures, among many others, seem to describe, or allude to, such a person as this; some of them referring to one circumstance, some to another, and some to several of them at the same time.

Gen. xlix. 10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be.* Here is an evident prophecy of some person, to whom the people should be gathered, and who was to make his appearance when the scepter had departed, or was departing from Judah. Now Christ was born about the time when the Jews became subject to the Romans, their country being reduced into the form of a province of the empire; so that they lost the power of inflicting the punishment of death, of which they had not been deprived

prived before, or, at least, for any length of time, though they had been tributary to several other nations. But after the death of Herod, they lost it entirely, and finally. This prophecy may also have a reference to the sovereignty departing from the *other tribes* before that period.

Is. xi. 1. *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord, &c. and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked, v. 10. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people. To it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.* In this prophecy there is evidently announced to us a person who was to descend from Jesse, or David, whose authority was to extend not only over the Jews, but over the Gentiles also.

That the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, should derive great advantage from the coming of the Messiah, was not only the meaning of the promise of God to Abraham, that *in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed*; but it seems to be more especially alluded to in Ps. ii. 7, 8, which was always understood by the Jews as referring to the
Messiah.

Messiah. *The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. The conversion of the Gentiles is more especially promised, Is. xlix. 6. And he said it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

The following prophecy of Jeremiah contains a clear prediction of the Messiah, as to descend from David, though it probably refers to some more glorious display of his power than has yet been exhibited, xxiii. 5. *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR*

RIGHTEOUSNESS. The same thing is also repeated Jer. xxxiii. 14. &c. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith*

she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.

Micah, v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travelleth hath brought forth. Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand, and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide, For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.* This prophecy led all the Jews to expect that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem; and this was exactly accomplished, for Mary was delivered of Jesus at that place, to which she and her family had repaired, in order to be enrolled, though her habitation was at Nazareth in Galilee.

That Christ should reside chiefly in Galilee seems, also, to have been the subject of a prophecy. For at a time when that country was grievously harrassed by the king of Assyria, just before the captivity of the ten Tribes, Isaiah delivered the following prophecy, ix. 1. *Though he lightly afflicted the land of Zabulun, and the land of Naphtali, he shall greatly honour her, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Gallilee of the Gentiles. The people that walked*

walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For thus, as the learned Joseph Mede has shewn, this passage ought to have been translated,

The character and humiliation of Christ, with several circumstances relating to his life and death, are plainly alluded to by Isaiah, in the following passages, lii. 13. *Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which hath not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider,* liii. 1. &c. *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised, and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.*

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, i. e. probably, as upon the scape-goat under the law, which was not hurt, but dismissed into the wilderness, to represent the entire removal, or forgiveness of their sins. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation; for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear (or take away) their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare (or took away) the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

It

It is impossible to find any character, or history, to which this prophecy corresponds, but that of Christ; and in him the whole of it was completely fulfilled; though there are difficulties with respect to some particular passages, which are variously rendered by different translators.

The prosperity of the Jews under some future king was clearly foretold by the prophet Zechariah, ix. 9, and even the circumstance of his riding upon an ass was probably alluded to by him. *Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, thy king cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*

When the second temple was built by those who returned from the Babylonish captivity, the old men, who remembered the temple of Solomon, wept, to see the difference; the latter temple being so mean in comparison of the former. But to comfort them, the prophet Haggai says, ii. 4. *Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord, and be strong all ye people of the land; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. It is yet a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than*

that of the former; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

This prophecy limits the coming of Christ, whose presence made the second temple more truly glorious than that of Solomon, to some time before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when that temple was levelled with the ground.

But the time in which the Messiah should make his appearance was most distinctly foretold by the prophet Daniel, who limited it to seventy weeks, after the decree of the kings of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem, ix. 24, &c. *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand; that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

Though there are several methods of computing these *seventy weeks* (every day of which is agreed to stand for a year) yet it is plain, that, according to any of them, that term must have expired about the time of Christ. Accordingly we find that there was, in fact, about that time, a general expectation among the Jews, and through all the
East,

East, of the appearance of some great prince, and reformer of religion.

That some person would be sent to *prepare the way for the Messiah*, seems to have been foretold with sufficient clearness, in the following prophecies. We also see in them, that he was to resemble the prophet *Elias*; and it appears, that such a person was expected by the Jews about the same time.

Isaiah xl. 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

This prophecy immediately follows another, concerning the captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians, and is introduced by the following animated consolation, which was, no doubt, written under a prospect of the happy state of things which was to be introduced by the Messiah, v. 1, 2. *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, &c.*

Mal. iii. 1, &c. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple : even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts, iv. 2. Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings, &c. v. 5. 6. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

These are but a small part of the prophecies which pretty plainly refer to Christ in the Old Testament; and though some of them, I doubt not, are to have a much more complete accomplishment than they have hitherto received, yet so many of the particulars are already fulfilled, as abundantly prove, that those prophets wrote by inspiration; no other than God being able to describe so distant an event with such exactness. These prophecies ought certainly to excite our closest attention to a character so distinguished before hand, and rendered so conspicuous, as we may say, even before he made his appearance in the world; and it should concur with other proofs, to strengthen our faith in the divine mission of Christ, and the divinity of his religion.

S E C-

SECTION III.

Prophecies in the New Testament.

THE same spirit of prophecy which attended every stage of the *Jewish* dispensation, has no less distinguished the *Christian*, which is to be considered as the continuation, and completion of the same general scheme.

The entire overthrow of the Jewish nation, and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, with many remarkable circumstances preceding and attending them, were expressly foretold by Christ. So distinct was his fore-knowledge of the great calamities that were to come upon his nation, that he was exceedingly moved and affected with the consideration of them, and he always expressed himself with the greatest tenderness and compassion whenever he mentioned them; as Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

Upon his approaching Jerusalem for the last time it is said, Luke xix. 41, &c. that *when he came near,*

near, he beheld the city, and wept over it; saying, *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

When he was going to be crucified, the expectation even of his own immediate suffering did not so far engross his thoughts, but that he felt the most lively compassion on the prospect of the future miseries of his countrymen. For, being followed by a great company of people, Luke xxiii. 27, &c. and, of women, who bewailed and lamented him; Jesus, turning unto them said, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

But the most circumstantial of the prophecies of our Lord, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, was delivered to his disciples, when they desired him to attend to the magnificence of that celebrated structure, as they were sitting in
the

the full view of it, on the mount of Olives. He immediately replied, Mat. xxiv. 2. *See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*; and this was even literally fulfilled about forty years after, when the city was taken by Titus, to the great regret of that Roman general, who would gladly have preserved so glorious a structure.

Several things that preceded and accompanied this dreadful overthrow of the Jews were distinctly recited by our Lord, as signals to his disciples to flee from the place, in order to escape the impending calamities. For when they asked him *when those things should be*, he replied, Mat. xxiv. 4. *Take heed, that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. Now, according to the testimony of Josephus, and other historians, all these things did, in a very remarkable manner, precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Indeed the whole of that work of Josephus, concerning the wars of the Jews, is the clearest, and most unexceptionable evidence of the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecies. The particulars of the prophecies and the event have been compared*
by

by several christian writers, but more especially by bishop Newton, Dr. Lardner, and Mr. Jortin.

Our Lord also mentions the persecution of his followers, as what would precede that event, Mat. xxiv. 9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

In connection with this persecution and dispersion of his disciples, our Lord foretold that his religion would be preached in all the *world*, meaning, probably, the Roman empire, before this great catastrophe; and this appears from history to have been accomplished. Mat. xxiv. 14. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.*

The more immediate signal for the christians to flee out of the country was the appearance of Roman armies, with their standards, and images (which were held in abomination by the Jews) in the holy land of Judea and in Jerusalem, Mat. xxiv. 15. *When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (who so readeth, let him understand) then let him who be in Judea, flee unto the mountains. Let him who is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out*
of

of his house : neither let him who is in the field, return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day : for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The obscurity which there is in the terms of the first part of this prediction in Matthew, is, in a great measure, removed by the plainer expressions, corresponding to them in Luke xxi. 20. ‘ *And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them who are in Judea, flee to the mountains ; and let them who are in the midst of it, depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For those be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days : for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

In these last words it is intimated, that the calamities of the Jews are to have an end, and that they are to be once more restored to the possession of Jerusalem. And from this, and other prophecies to the same purpose, we learn that this great event is

to take place, when the gospel shall have been preached throughout the whole world, and when some, at least, of all nations, shall be converted to the profession of it. The apostle Paul says, Rom. xi. 25. *I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

At the time that our Saviour delivered this prophecy, there was far from being any appearance of its being accomplished. The Jews had been a long time in subjection to the Romans, whose empire then extended over almost all the known world, and was in its greatest strength; so that it could not have been imagined that so inconsiderable a people as the Jews were, would ever think of opposing them, and much less that they should hold out, till they were reduced to such extreme distress as our Lord has described. Still less would any man, not conscious of divine inspiration, have ventured to foretel such a circumstance, as the circumvallation of Jerusalem, when, if they were reduced by the Romans, the conquest might have been effected by many methods more compendious than this.

Besides, there was not in our Saviour's time any example of a country being reduced to so great
desolation

desolation by the Romans, and of so complete a dispersion of the inhabitants, as that which befel the Jews. The Romans, were, in general, merciful conquerors, so that the state of almost all the countries that were subject to them was considerably improved by that means.

Still less was it likely that so noble a structure as the temple, which was probably the most sumptuous and magnificent building in the world, would have been demolished, either by the Romans, who would have been proud of such a monument of their victory, or by the Jews, who had the most superstitious veneration for it; and it was so situated, as to be in no danger of being destroyed by a casual fire, or any other accident. But, notwithstanding this, our Lord, pre-emptorily pronounced, that these things, improbable as they must have appeared, would not fail to come to pass in that very generation, Mat. xxiv. 34, &c. *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

The successful propagation of the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition it was to meet with, and the grievous persecutions of those who adhered to it; also the deplorable corruption of christianity, and the restoration of it after that corruption, in a very distant age, were all the subjects of prophecy by our Lord and his apostles; and most of them
were

were events, which no man could have foreseen or expected, at the time in which the predictions were delivered.

The success of the gospel is certainly to be understood by what is said in the antient Jewish prophecies concerning the great extent and glory of the Messiah's kingdom; but our Lord himself must have had a more particular view to it in several of his parables, as in that concerning the small grain of *mustard-seed*, which grew into a great tree; the small quantity of *leaven*, which leavened the whole lump; and many others, by which he professedly represents the wonderful spread of his gospel; and it must have been with the fullest assurance of this event, that he solemnly commissioned his disciples to *go and preach the gospel to every creature*.

It is not improbable, but that our Lord might speak prophetically, when he called himself the *light of the world*, and said, *No man cometh to the Father, but by me. No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him, &c.* If these declarations were meant to extend beyond the time and country in which they were delivered, the history of mankind affords a striking proof of the fulfilment of them; and the present state of the world makes it exceedingly probable, that no people will ever attain to just and useful conceptions of God, &c. but by the gospel, and that by
this

this means all nations will, in due time, acquire them.

That there was to be a great *corruption of christianity* was expressly foretold not only in the book of Revelation, in which the rise, progress, and utter destruction of some great antichristian power are most certainly described, but also in other writings of the apostles, and especially those of Paul, as 2 Thess. ii. 1, &c. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

The coming of this antichristian power, he farther says, v. 9. *is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.*

This apostle represents this corruption as having begun even in his time, though that monstrous antichristian power could not receive its full estab-

lishment till some other power, which was then in the way (by which he probably meant the Roman empire) should be removed. But whenever it should be established, he expressly foretels its utter destruction, v. 6, &c. *And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*

The particulars of this great corruption of christianity are more distinctly expressed by the apostle Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, iv. 1. *Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of daemons; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, of them who believe and know the truth.*

It is impossible not to perceive in these prophecies, especially if they be compared with others in the book of Daniel, and of the Revelation, the plain characters of the church of Rome; allowing for the obscurity of many of the phrases by which the Papal usurpations on the rights of God and man are here expressed. These prophecies have been fully accomplished, the Popish corruptions

and

and usurpations having proceeded almost without interruption, for more than fourteen hundred years.

That so simple a religion as the christian should have been subject to such dreadful corruption, must have appeared improbable, at the time of its first promulgation; the like not having happened to the Jewish religion, or, indeed, to any other religion under heaven. And yet when the corruption was established, and had been supported by all the temporal powers under heaven, for the space of many centuries, and was intimately incorporated with the civil constitutions of those states, its general restoration to its primitive purity must have appeared much more improbable; and yet such progress has been already made in this great work, that there can be no doubt but that, in due time, the whole prophecy will be completed, and christianity be once more what it originally was.











